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CONFRONTING MYSELF: AN  
AUTO/BIOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATION OF  
THE IMPACT OF CLASS AND EDUCATION  
ON THE FORMATION OF SELF AND  
IDENTITY.

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Thesis submitted  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 2018



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# Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of the inter-relationship between class transition and education, in a bid to understand the impact of both in the formation of self and identity. This thesis considers that processes of recognition, deeply personal, but also located in institutional encounters, are essential to moving beyond feelings of illegitimacy and to moving across class boundaries. It is a story of one woman's agency and greater capacity to talk truth to power.

Using an auto/biographical approach, I illustrate how education has enabled me to cross class boundaries to become a senior lecturer in a university, and to confront how my class origins and family status have had an enduring impact on my epistemological beliefs. I highlight how misrecognition can become a source of agency, to the benefit of self and those whom I teach.

Drawing on critical theory and feminist approaches, I argue that auto/biography provides a legitimate means of illuminating the minutiae of self/other encounters. A psycho-social multidisciplinary lens encompassing concepts of habitus and recognition, has enabled me to chronicle and theorise the lived experience of class relations and how these can be understood and transcended.

This is a story of 'une miraculée' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Using the theories of Pierre Bourdieu and Axel Honneth, as interpretive frameworks, I present a phenomenological perspective of what it is like to be a 'lecturer from the working class' in class-ridden society and a neoliberal education system, and the disrespect and misrecognition these can bring. Writing auto/biographically, augmented by the use of a collaborative narrative approach (Arvey, 1998), I confront feelings of illegitimacy in academia and demonstrate how undertaking the PhD has had an impact on me personally and professionally.

The aim of this thesis was to speak the truth about the dominant middle class ideology in the academy; and to challenge the academic community, in particular middle class colleagues, to confront their unconscious class prejudices.



Furthermore, I anticipate that this research will make an important contribution to the existing research paradigm that uses auto/biographical approaches to show the lived experiences of people's lives; and show that writing auto/biographically is therapeutic, educational and reflexive, as well as agentic.

## **Acknowledgements**

I want to thank all of those people who over the years have shown me love and who have shown me the right path - some, but not all, are still present in my life. I would like to give a special mention to my brother – he knows why.

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Thank you to all my friends who have, like me, lived with the thesis for six years, with a particular thank you to Jo who became a loving confidant helping me to confront myself, clarify my thinking about difficult issues, and reclaim myself as an educated woman from the working-class.

To James – just thank you for loving me and being there – giving me space and time, sharing the highs and lows on this long and emotional adventure. Not to forget Charlie who called me to order for his walks when I had been sat in one place for too long.

And finally, thank you to my examiners for their interest in this thesis, taking time to engage with it and for giving me the opportunity to talk about it in depth.



## A letter to my sixteen-year-old self

Dear Polly<sup>1</sup>

*I know life is hard for you right now and this will lead you to make less than sensible choices, I know that I can't stop that: you have to find your own way. But if you were able to read this letter this is what I would tell you.*

*There is a place called university where you can follow your interests for reading and thinking. You will meet people there who are different to you - but don't let them put you down - you are an intelligent young lady and don't you forget that. I know learning does not come easily to you, as it does to your brother; it is always a struggle, but you get there anyway, proving to yourself, more than anything else, that you can do it. It will also give you a chance to move out of home. That will save you a lot of angst later on.*

*Despite what you think, having a boyfriend and getting married isn't the be all and end all. In your rush to find the right person you will get involved with some incredibly unsuitable characters. You cannot avoid this as you will think that you are in love. My advice is to be patient and wait for someone who values you and loves you - you will find them... but later than you think. I have just been reading a book by a man*

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<sup>1</sup> The name, given to me by my grandad, that I have always preferred.

*called Axel Honneth - he says that recognition in the form of love, rights and solidarity underpins what it is to be human so don't accept anything less.*

*You will find your work life a struggle - you will get bored and restless because you see injustices, and you will struggle to conform to the rules. You will either be passed over for promotion for these very reasons or be offered opportunities that you will refuse. I have now learnt that this is because you have no confidence in yourself. Take them and embrace them. There will also be people along the way who try to help you - listen to them - they do help you to find the path. You will go through a long period when you get lost, emotionally and mentally - you do come through it, stronger and wiser.*

*Be warned, you will find your relationship with your mum difficult over the years, this will take its toll on you emotionally - be prepared. If you were my daughter, I would have loved you and been proud of you. I think my advice is to accept who you are rather than trying to be what she wants you to be, but it will be hard- you will never get there because you can't. Oh, and despite what she tells you, she isn't always right.*

*And finally, you are more resourceful than you think and you will find your way and be successful. Never be ashamed to admit who you are and where you come from.*

*Polly xxx*

# Chapter One: Introduction

## Introduction

I came to the topic of my research through the circumstances of my own life. I was born out of wedlock in the 1960s at a time when it was still socially, and morally, unacceptable.

The bastard, like the prostitute, thief, and beggar, belongs to that motley crowd of disreputable social types which society has generally resented, always endured. He [sic] is a living symbol of social irregularity, an undeniable evidence of contra moral forces; in short, a problem- a problem as old and unsolved as human existence itself (Davis, 1939, p.215)

Under the law, and by definition, I was, and still am, identified as illegitimate. Indeed, it is only since the Family Law Reform Act (1987) that all remaining legal distinctions between children born to married and unmarried parents have been removed.

From being born into an ethnic, classed, and gendered position, I occupy the associated social position as white, 'working-class' woman, with the related ways of knowing (Moi, 1991). Being the child of a single mother in the 1960s, not only invited stigmatisation, it also meant being raised in social and economic disadvantage. This is noteworthy because, while it is important to acknowledge that researchers in the field of social and educational inequalities would agree that poverty alone cannot explain educational inequalities, Sullivan, Ketende and Joshi (2013) found that class inequalities in educational outcomes were significant. At the time of my own upbringing, the children of single mothers did relatively badly at school, only 10 per cent passed selection tests (Marsden, 1973). Even today, despite a widening participation agenda, the chances of someone born into my socio-economic circumstances going on to university is unlikely; only 15 per cent of children receiving free school meals (an indicator of relative poverty) go on to higher education (The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2014).

But I have achieved in the education system, I am what Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) would call 'un miraculé, an educationally highly successful member of a

disadvantaged group, who is able to survive and thrive in education despite the unjust distribution of symbolic capital in the academic system. While this notion of *les miraculés* remains a concept only fleetingly explored in his empirical work, this concept is invoked in Bourdieu's own autobiography,

My trajectory may be described as miraculous; I suppose—an ascension to a place where I don't belong. And so to be able to live in a world that is not mine I must try to understand both things: what it means to have an academic mind—how such is created—and at the same time what was lost in acquiring it' (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu and Eagleton, 1992, p.117).

As a someone from the working-class who has made a class transition (Kirk, 2008), I have recognised how education has been agentic. Of particular interest to me was how studying for my MA, when I was a teacher, had proved to be a source of empowerment. So, at the inception of my research study in 2011, I decided I wanted to examine the agentic power of post-graduate education on in-service teachers. However, early on in the research process I was confronted with my own research bias. As someone who was instinctively suspicious and critical of the dominant ideology in capitalist society, I was forced to acknowledge that concealed behind the research question was an attempt to identify and address inequalities in the access to, and opportunities within higher education for teachers who had come from different socio-economic groups. Additionally, entry into the research field of teacher education in 2011, coincided with a change of Government, and educational ideology leading to a new set of policy initiatives in all areas of education which made me challenge my assumptions about education and my role as a teacher educator.

Thus, I found myself in a position in which I could not deny my own experience as a starting point for the process of enquiry. I felt, as Etherington (2004) has pointed out, that recognition of my personal history could only serve to enrich my role as a researcher: so I began by writing about my own educational history. As I wrote, I began to realise that feelings of illegitimacy were not merely idiosyncratic character traits, but were also influenced by systemic practices within the socio-political context within which I have lived and worked. Mills (1959/2000) described this quality of mind that an individual needs for understanding the larger historical

context in terms of its meaning for the inner life as 'the sociological imagination'. In this thesis I adopt the sociological imagination to confront my history and my biography, and the relations between the two in society, in which I shift from the socio-political to the psychological through auto/biographical writing. As such, the auto/biographical approach evolved out of the organic and dynamic processes of doctoral study.

My family history of socio-economic disadvantage and illegitimacy has continued to influence everything I do, from the way I teach, to what I choose to read and write about. And whilst initially I had no desire to present a critical social analysis of my own experience of the lived relations of class and educational practices, in a reflexive turn I began to look inwards to raise questions about the impact of class and education on my own class transition. In this way I think the thesis presented itself to me. I felt that because of my distinctive position as an academic from disadvantaged beginnings, I had a rare opportunity to explore the trajectory that led me from poverty to becoming a Senior Lecturer in a University, as Bourdieu (2007) had done before me in 'Sketch for a Self-Analysis'. Thus, my research has become an analysis of 'une miraculée' in which I explore the reciprocal relationship between my working-class background and education, and the effect of both on my 'self' and identity, from my position as a female working-class academic. The thesis examines the impact that class and education, and to a lesser degree gender, has had on my life, and how this has shaped my epistemological beliefs as a teacher educator. Whilst at times the thesis has been painful and difficult to write, especially as someone who, on occasions, finds it difficult to face myself, I persevered because I know I am writing about a life that, although not identical to, is representative of others like me.

## **The research focus**

Research and policy suggest that predominant in a working-class relationship to education is that the structure is not their structure: the system does not belong to them as much as it does to the middle-class (Reay, 2001). So in this thesis I adopt the



sociological imagination to explore both the public and private experience of class and education from my own experience of 'une miraculée'.

This thesis is motivated by a passionate desire to improve the understanding of working-class experiences in education in order to disrupt the rhetorical discourses of equality, fairness and meritocracy within the education system. And while, of course, I cannot compare my experiences to that of Bourdieu, I, too, wanted to find out what it means to be an academic: how I got here, what was gained, and what was lost in the process of class transition, and how it has informed the teacher educator I am today.

The aim of this study is to use auto/biographical methods, using psychosocial frameworks as interpretive devices, to present the story of 'une miraculée', in an attempt to identify the relationship between class transition and education, and to understand the impact of both in the formation of the self and identity. Through confronting my own history and experiences, using Bourdieu and Honneth as sensitising frameworks, I set out to

- establish my motivation for continuous academic development;
- illustrate how 'formal' education has enabled me to cross class boundaries;
- share the embodied experiences of being an educated working-class woman in a middle-class field;
- illustrate how my class origins have had an enduring impact on my epistemological beliefs;
- show how the PhD has had an impact on me personally and professionally.

Far too often, academic work on social class 'strips the affective out of accounts, sanitising the pain and pleasures, and overlooking the psychic experience of living class in contemporary society' (Reay, 2015, p.21). But as my story illustrates, using feminist epistemology, the lived experience of being working-class within the academy can be filled with fear, anxiety, denial, guilt and huge ambivalences which this thesis intentionally sets out to elucidate for the reader. I am certain that the data

will reveal aspects of my autobiography that may be previously unknown, unwanted or undesirable; the parts of myself, that because of internalised beliefs about how I should behave, have remained hidden. In this way I will be confronting myself.

The findings from the study will contribute to the existing literature that traces the inscription of class on the lived experiences of people's lives. As Zandy (1994) points out '[a] working class identity is an ambiguous gift' so this thesis will present one instance of how a child born into poverty, has used education to traverse the path from social disadvantage to the academy. It will explore the opportunities and challenges that upwardly mobile people face as they cross class boundaries with a particular focus on a lecturer in initial teacher education (ITE). And it will examine the impact that power of engagement with a PhD has had in identity formation. My intention is to represent academics from non-traditional backgrounds who often sit in the margins of academic life, and to identify the false and fragmented consciousness of the academy to instigate discussion about, and across, difference. I aim to speak truth to power.

This research will also make an important contribution to the existing research paradigm that uses auto/biographical approaches to show the lived experiences of people's lives. I have pushed the boundaries of auto/biographical research by being both the researcher and the research subject, and aim to demonstrate that researchers can conduct auto/biographical research on their own lives, and for it still to be valid and credible. It will exemplify how writing auto/biographically can be therapeutic and agentic.

## **Fragile identities**

To study classed and gendered experiences is to situate them in relation to the structures of the field in which they arise. In this brief introduction to the research field I suggest that both my identity as a learner and the identity of the institution in

which the research is situated are fragile insofar that I/it are both sensitive and vulnerable to real and perceived external constraints.

## **The fragile self**

I am a Senior Lecturer working in the field of initial teacher education (ITE). But what makes my situation distinctive is that I was not destined to be an academic. I am the oldest of two children born out of wedlock to an unmarried mother (my father was absent), a relatively rare situation in the 1960s. This meant that life was tough: economic, social and cultural disadvantage were all significant in my childhood. My teenage life, in particular, was pervaded by fragilities and constraints arising from poverty, complex family relationships and mental ill-health. Despite the wealth of research to suggest that I, like most children born into socio-economic disadvantage, should have remained in that social milieu, I have crossed social boundaries and am now someone who is considered to be a middle-class professional. Indeed, some would question whether I am still working-class based on the reality of where I am now, i.e. professional, highly educated, and comparatively well paid. For some, 'class transition', Kirk's preferred term which he claims better emphasises the complex and complicated nature of social mobility, (Kirk, 2008) is seen as an escape from disadvantage to a more privileged situation, but for me it has also been associated with pain, estrangement and feelings of illegitimacy.

Throughout this thesis I refer to myself as a teacher educator, researcher and academic <sup>2</sup>:each role bringing with it its own intersubjective identity and feelings of legitimacy or indeed illegitimacy. Notably, as a teacher educator I feel as if I have entered academe through 'the service entrance', based on my professional

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<sup>2</sup> the concept of academic used in this thesis, is broader than reference to those who hold a position in the university and the occupation. Instead it draws on Petersen's (2007) definition which refers to the process through which identity is developed, negotiated and enacted as one gets an academic research qualification.

qualifications rather than my academic profile. Furthermore, I am conscious of features in myself which I believe are resonances of my working-class background which result in feelings of fragility. This is indicative of my struggle for identity and is discussed in chapter eight.

### **The fragile institution**

I work in a large education faculty in a new, post-1992 university. Twenty-five years ago many colleges and polytechnics became universities as a result of the Further and Higher Education Act (1992). My own institution started out as a teacher training college and gained full university status in the mid 2000s. Even today the existence of 'new universities' is clouded by condescension verging on hostility (Scott, 2012). Scott (2012) asks why the former colleges and polytechnics have failed to be fully accepted by the academy. He suggests that it is because the post-1992 universities have delivered mass higher education, widening participation for students from working-class homes and ethnic minorities which runs counter to the elitist view of a university education (Scott, 2012). Some could argue that the institution, like me, has entered academe through the back door, illegitimately. Even today former colleges and polytechnics that have become a 'university' have failed to be fully accepted in academe.

Post-1992 universities form a subgroup of the 100, or so, universities in the UK which are less established and have less status than traditional Russell Group universities, redbrick universities and plate glass universities - which are typically research intensive, achieving high ratings in the Research Assessment Exercise. My institution is what typically has been called a teaching university as opposed to a research intensive institution, although our research culture is developing. Teaching-led institutions, with a regionally-based mission, are generally to be seen as having least market presence at a national level (Foskett, 2011). Most 'new' universities like my own institution, offer vocational, professional and technical subjects and have relative open access. As such, my university does not have the full status that more traditional institutions have.

The status of universities is being increasingly defined by the profile of their student intake (Reay, David and Ball, 2005) and there are still significant social class differences in entry to different types of universities, with higher status universities recruiting a greater proportion of the students from among the most advantaged groups in society (Savage, 2015).

We currently have 17,000 students with just over half, 54 per cent, coming from the local community (University HESA Data, 2017) - this is something we, as an institution, are proud of (University website). Furthermore, in common with a large number of post-1992 institutions, my university contains a statistically higher proportion (32 per cent) of 'non-traditional' students, (first-generation university attendees from working-class or minority backgrounds and mature students, those aged over 23 years) and 32 percent of the students study part-time. Many universities recognise that non-traditional students and part-time students are often more vulnerable than traditional students (Merrill and Johnston, 2011) and this contributes to a relatively high attrition rate. Furthermore, we, as an institution, were left in a particularly susceptible position in 2012 after England's higher education system moved away from one largely funded by the taxpayer, to one that is mainly financed by graduates from their future earnings; the number of part-time and mature students fell dramatically as a consequence. We are a university that needs to recruit rather than select (Rolfe, 2003) and a fall in intake, coupled with high attrition rates, can have a significant impact on the numbers of courses, departments and staff.

A post-1992 university like my own presents a different cultural environment to that of a more prestigious or traditional university. Not only are our students more likely to be first generation university graduates or come from a working-class background, but also many more of my colleagues come from non-traditional academic backgrounds compared to a more traditional university setting. One could argue that I have 'found' a university where I feel that I can, at least, pass as belonging, because compared to other (more elite) institutions, there are more people who are 'more like me' (Ryan and Sackrey, 1984; Dews and Law, 1995; Mahony and Zmroczek, 1997). However, class is still a complex marker of the 'other' in academia (Lynch and O'Neill, 1994) and the feeling of being 'othered' due to my class origins has not diminished: it

has led to feelings of not only illegitimacy but also inauthenticity in which my 'historical class consciousness conflicts powerfully with a contemporary identity which often feels both fictional and fraudulent' (Reay, 1997, p.18).

## **The research approach**

I have used an auto/biographical<sup>3</sup> approach which draws on my auto/biography. My use of the slashed term 'auto/biography' offers a theoretically informed research approach which draws on Stanley's assertion that accounts of others' lives influence how we see and understand our own, and that our understanding of our own lives will impact on how we interpret others' lives (Stanley, 1995). Thus, auto/biography, as I have applied it for this research, challenges the idea of a single, stable or essential self (Stanley, 1995) and instead draws on the intersubjective nature of a life as lived. In using an auto/biographical approach I have paid attention to the subjective dimensions of classed experience, which may be missed by more conventional, objectivist approaches.

For a narrative to be autobiographical the author, the narrator and the protagonist must be identical (Lejeune, 1989). Throughout my auto/biography, I have aimed for a self-conscious approach to writing, acknowledging the relationship between the research process, the writing process and the self. This method has emphasised the emotional and personal dimension of the research (Coffey, 1999). I have drawn on both feminist and critical approaches to research as both methodologies challenge the issue of power in society.

To stand outside oneself, to be both the subject of the research and the researcher and to engage in self-judgement or self-description – requires a high level of reflexivity; a self-conscious standing back from the self in an effort to make claims about the sort

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<sup>3</sup> Autobiography without the slash is also used in this thesis – this is to stay true to the literary field.

of person one is. To do this I have used a multi-modal approach to data collection. When I write about data in the context of this thesis I am referring to an empirical narrative, a mode of narrative which has a 'primary allegiance to the real' (Clough, 2002, p. 96), true to the fact or the experience. I have chosen to differentiate each phase of the research by using specifically chosen fonts to help the reader recall the type of data collection method used. Memories and reflections of the past are written in Courier to make it look like a traditionally type-written diary; *present day diary entries, i.e. those written within the research process*, are written in Bradley Hand to suggest daily writing activity; and, for collaborative narrative I have used Humnst 777, a contemporary font to indicate conversation. The analysis of the empirical narrative is written in the principal font (Cambria) presented throughout the thesis to indicate a more objective researcher position.

In phase one, I have used my memories and reflection growing up; written autobiographically. In phase two I have combined my memories and reflections with some primary data in the form of *contemporary diary entries*. And in the final phase, phase three, I have used a collaborative narrative approach to enable me to understand my own life. Alongside the empirical narrative, in each phase I have interwoven my critical analysis of the data (using the principal font throughout the thesis), drawing on the theoretical frameworks introduced in the next section.

## **Introducing my theoretical friends**

Auto/biographical approaches are positioned within an interpretivist paradigm that may draw on psychology, sociology and critical theory. Using this psychosocial approach, I have used Bourdieu and Honneth as sensitising frameworks for the analysis and interpretation of the narrative.

No discussion of class and education can ignore the influence of Bourdieu. I was drawn to Bourdieu's work for three reasons: firstly, he offers a perceptive approach to examining the complexities of class; secondly, he provides a parallel with my own experience; and finally, he emphasises the need for researchers to investigate their own social spaces in order to break with taken-for-granted practices (Bourdieu, 1988). As Moi (1991) has argued, Bourdieu's uniqueness was the 'development of what one might call a micro theory of social power' (1991, p.1019). I have used Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital, which lie at the core of his theory, as a preliminary sensitising framework to analyse the structural forces that have impacted on my life.

However, as Chapman Hoult (2009) critically observed Bourdieu failed sufficiently to engage with how some people with limited educational and social capital survived and prospered in the education system. And this was evident from my own perspective: describing the nature of 'being' of a working-class teacher educator was not as straightforward as I had anticipated. My initial set of data suggested that I needed to go beyond the exploration of my relationship with society, to explore the subjective experience of feeling both working-class and illegitimate. I needed a framework that could help me explain why I have turned to education as the means by which I can claim a sense of self, and remedy previous misrecognitions (West, Fleming and Finnegan, 2013).

Honneth's (1995, 2007) theory of recognition provided a conduit between structure and agency from a psychosocial perspective (Fleming and Gonzalez-Monteagudo, 2014) which connects 'a theory of psychic development with a theory of social change in order to develop an account that is empirically grounded in real experiences and normatively robust enough to critically evaluate contemporary social relations' (Zurn, 2005, p.92).

Honneth's (1995) theory starts from the Hegelian idea that identity is constructed intersubjectively, through a process of mutual recognition. Honneth (1995) maintained that citizens morally require recognition from others, and people have to be recognised, in various ways, for their identities to be fulfilled. He stressed the



importance of social relationships in the development and maintenance of a person's identity (Anderson, 1995 in Honneth, 1995). Honneth takes from Hegel 'the idea that full human flourishing is dependent on the existence of well-established ethical relations – in particular love, law and ethical life which can only be established through a struggle for recognition' (Anderson, in Honneth 1995; xi).

In combination, Bourdieu and Honneth offer a socio-cultural and psychological framework for interpreting my dynamic and intersubjective experience of education and class by linking the distribution of capital and recognition. Bourdieu (1984; 1988; 1990; 1998) has helped me confront myself to understand how the habitus was formed and has become embodied, based on capital which has shaped my everyday experiences; Honneth (1995) illuminates how recognition in the form of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem has been agentic.

## **Structure of the thesis**

This thesis aims to explore what Kirk (2008) terms 'class transition' and to confront the problematic nature of my educational success and how this has impacted on the formation of self and identity.

The presentation of this thesis does not adhere to what might be called a conventional format. Drawing on the auto/biographical approach, the thesis is written in the first person. Each chapter presents not only a 'thinking unit' (Lofland and Lofland, 1995) of the thesis, but also a gradual unveiling of my 'self' as I make the journey from working-class child to 'academic from the working-class'.

In this introductory chapter I have given a brief overview of the main themes and concepts of the research. I have set out the background of the study stating why I think this is a worthy study and its potential significance. I have introduced the research approach and the main theoretical frameworks. In chapter two I introduce the main concepts around which the thesis has been constructed: class, education, self and

identity. And in chapter three, I show why these concepts are significant to me as an educated working-class woman. Chapter four introduces the reader to my theoretical friends: Bourdieu, Honneth and the many working-class academic writers, mostly women, who have provided both inspiration and comfort on my journey. Entitled 'Auto/biography as critical enquiry' chapter five introduces the research approach of auto/biography and how I have problematised the self, using my sociological imagination (Mills, 1959/2000). In this chapter, I describe in detail the research design, ethical concerns and limitations. Also, this chapter locates the empirical research within the interpretative paradigm of social science research. The research rationale presented here sees research as a social activity, bounded by its context.

Chapters six, seven, eight and nine are the chapters in which I present and analyse the empirical narrative. As I wrote each of the chapters I did not attempt to impose a unified consistency of approach to the text, as the narrative in each chapter generated its own method of presenting the raw data, and analysis. In chapter six 'The making of a teacher educator', I have written an account of my passage from growing up in poverty to becoming a teacher educator. I have recounted my memories and my reflections and set the ideological and political context for the period and layered this with my critical analysis. This chapter is set out in two sections: 1) Border crossing – this section recounts my early childhood and school life to understand why and how I have become 'une miraculée', and 2) Capital gains and losses – this section charts the winding path from school leaver to teacher educator. Chapter seven presents 'The lived experience of the working-class teacher educator'. In this section I juxtapose my 'working-class' identity alongside the neoliberal education context within which I work today. In this chapter I illustrate interconnections between my identity and its historical, psychological, social and political formation. This chapter is built around my memories and reflections, alongside my *field notes and reflective diary*. In chapter eight, I introduce a unique feature of my own auto/biographical research – the collaborative narrative approach (Arvey, 1998) in which I use conversation with my supervisor to construct a complex negotiated account to challenge my own struggles with notions of self and identity. In chapter nine 'We make the road by walking' I write about the subjective experience of being a

PhD student. This chapter is full of hope and promise as I illustrate the transition of my thinking as I walk the road towards recognition. In these chapters the reader will be able to observe me moving backwards and forwards between the public and private spaces, which will show a general awareness of the self as a social object that has an effect on others, whilst attending to one's inner thoughts and feelings (Fenigstein, Scheier and Buss, 1975). Finally, chapter ten 'I have not always been who I am now' provides a discussion and conclusion of the study overall.

However, if the reader is seeking the more traditional structure of chapters in a research thesis, chapter two sets the context, chapters two, three and four present a review of the literature, and chapter five discusses the methodology. Chapters six to nine present the empirical narrative and analysis, and chapter ten forms the conclusion.

## **Chapter 2: Class, Education, and Self and Identity**

Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both (Mills, 1959, 2000, p. 3)

My natal class position and education have both been pivotal in developing my sense of self and identity. This chapter introduces the three main sociological themes, or conceptual constructs, that underpin the research: class, education, and self and identity.

### **Class**

Whilst of course most countries have some form of social stratification, class is a phenomenon, that while part of the lexicon in Britain is not widely shared by other countries. Class in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is fundamentally associated with the discourse of inequality. Inequality is all around us – some all-too visible, but much of it obscure and insidious, just like class.

### **The theory of class**

My own theories of class have been influenced by Marxist traditions. According to Marxism, there are two main classes of people: the bourgeoisie who control means of production, and the proletariat who provide the labour; these are objective positions which allow some people in society to have greater access to material reward than others. Marx was concerned with how processes, through existing social structures, maintain and reproduce themselves and saw the education system as exploitative, working in the interests of ruling class elites through three main functions: producing and reproducing class inequality, legitimatising class inequality and working in the interests of capitalist employers (Collier, 2012).

Unlike other types of strata, social class is not established by legal or religious provision. It is a social construction and came into existence through the attempts by the middle-class to consolidate their identities and social position by identifying 'others' from whom they could distance themselves (Skeggs, 1997). Othering, not only serves to mark and name those people thought to be different from oneself, it is also a process through which people construct their own identities in reference to others (Weis, 1995, p.17). Or as Thompson (1963) asserts

Class happens when some men [sic], as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs (Thompson, 1963, p.9)

My understanding of class has been further informed by Bourdieu's work. Bourdieu (1984) introduced a complexity previously missing from many previous accounts of class and stratification. He argued that class is different from the Marxist approach which sees capital in purely economic terms, defined in terms of ownership of and/or control over the means of production. Instead, Bourdieu (1984) made a distinction between economic and symbolic systems in class analysis. He considered the actual processes by which social reproduction is achieved, is through the acquisition and legitimisation of not just economic capital, which is composed of wealth, income and monetary assets in general; but of two further types of capital: cultural capital, which consists of embodied dispositions, cultural goods and educational credentials; and, social capital, which refers to the resources accruing as a result of social connections gained via membership of networks and groups (Bourdieu, 1986). Although Bourdieu (1986) did use occupation as an indicator of social class, he moved beyond this by arguing that classes are distinguished through location within a three-dimensional social space, 'defined by volume of capital, composition of capital, and change to these two properties over time (manifested by past and potential trajectories in social space)' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 114). The more capital one has, the more powerful a position one occupies in social life; the amount of cultural capital one has can help or hinder social mobility just as much as income or wealth (Bourdieu, 1986). Furthermore, Bourdieu (1984) hypothesised that children internalise the

dispositions associated with capital at an early age and that such dispositions guide the young towards their 'appropriate' social positions.

For Bourdieu (1990) class is defined simultaneously by 'its "being" and its "being-perceived"' (1990, p.135) so it is both structural and subjective, which means that classification categorises, divides and separates individuals (Bourdieu, 1991). Through this process collective identities are constructed by which social actors come to know themselves and others. Like Bourdieu (1984), I perceive social class and its effects a reality, but something that can be changed.

## **Class today**

Class today is still a nebulous and slippery term. Over the years, descriptions of class position have included distinctions between: manual versus non-manual workers, owners versus employees, status rankings, income levels, and educational levels. In addition, subjective class identifications are based on the more ordinary things in the social milieu, including: the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the houses we live in, the way we walk and talk, our plans and aspirations, our politics (although this is increasingly complex), and our values and beliefs.

Government rhetoric has distanced itself from class terminology, preferring terms like disadvantaged, yet policy, as well as images in popular culture, remain implicitly based on class stereotypes and prejudices. And, despite the fact that social class is no longer central to British sociological analysis, the reality is that class divisions in Britain remain as well embedded as ever. It seems that class inequalities have not only survived but, in some respects, increased (Evans and Tilley, 2017). However, it is argued that increased social mobility, affluence and educational expansion have weakened the distinctiveness of social class, for example Dorling (2014a) suggests that the meaning of social class has changed as people move around the world holding different positions in different places. But as Evans and Tilley (2017) argue, even if the size of class groups and the definition of what constitutes working-class and middle-class may have changed, there are still stable class divisions in British society

and claims about the demise of class differences do not fit with the evidence of continuing class based inequalities.

In a recent survey by the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2017), it was found that although working-class occupations are considered to amount to twenty-five per cent of the total, 60 per cent of the British population defined themselves as working class. Furthermore, in the recent British Social Attitudes Survey (2016) large numbers of professional people (47 per cent) claimed a working-class identity when they are objectively middle-class. However, the survey suggests that these figures should be treated with caution because someone who is in a middle-class occupation, but whose parents were in working-class jobs, may still claim to be working-class because they feel that they do not have as much in common with those middle-class people who have not been occupationally upwardly mobile. This is something that is true of my own experience, explored later in the thesis.

In 2015, Savage and his colleagues tried to bring class definitions up-to-date and identified seven classes (Savage, 2015) based on 'clusters' of the three types of capital Bourdieu (1986) had identified: economic, social and cultural. It is the class group at the bottom of the hierarchy, the precariat, which shares the same characteristics that I recognise as features of my own definition of working-class. This group had low household income, were likely to rent property, had few social ties with associates in higher-status occupations, and had limited cultural capital; in other words, they have low economic, social and cultural capital. Savage (2015) identified five classes between the elite and the precariat which had a hybrid mix of capitals which he argues is precisely what makes it difficult to define a coherent middle-class. However, all of these groups had evidence of higher social, economic and cultural capital than the aforementioned precariat.

Even though no one representation of class is definitive, it is still true that most Britons today understand the traditional class labels, and how they can apply them to their own status, based on a system through which people identify with a group of people who share common experiences (Eagleton, 2017). For that reason, I have used everyday descriptions of 'working-class' or 'middle-class'. But it is worth

acknowledging that even within the definitions of working-class and middle-class I have used, these are not homogenous groups; even within each category there are huge variations between social, economic and cultural capital which have a significant impact on a person's life-chances and the experience of class as a subjective experience.

## **The working-class**

In this thesis I write about growing up working-class which, in this context, is actually a euphemism for being illegitimate and growing up in poverty, with low social and cultural capital. The discourse of the working-class, both historically and currently, is constituted as an unknowing, uncritical, tasteless mass from which the middle classes can draw their distinctions (Skeggs, 2000 in Reay, 2001). The pathologisation of the working-class has a long history (Skeggs, 1997; Lawler, 2000; Charlesworth, 2000; McKenzie, 2015). While the inequitable operations of social class influences all of us, regardless of where we are positioned in the social field, it is still the most vulnerable, the working-class, who are made to bear the greatest psychological burden of an unequal society (Reay, 2005). The negativity associated with the working-class is ubiquitous, which is why women, in particular, rarely speak of class (Skeggs, 1997). Her seminal study revealed how young working-class women distanced themselves from identifying as working-class because of the negative stereotypes in which working-class women are seen as dirty, dangerous and without value (Skeggs, 1997).

The gap between the rich and poor has become an established part of the 'way things are' for many in England, often understood through discourses of individualisation which attribute material success or failure to either individual effort, individual talent or a mixture of the two (Reay, 2001). And the targeting of the poor has been almost a constant policy refrain over the three decades since Margaret Thatcher, in the 1980s (when I was a young person), promoted the under-class theory in order to implement neoliberal policies. This was taken up and strengthened during the 1990s and 2000s with the constant Conservative narrative of a 'Broken Britain' which focused on the behaviour of troubled families (Savage, 2015). It has become popular opinion, and a



default understanding, that those who use the welfare state do so because of their own lifestyle choices. Indeed, government rhetoric puts the problems of society squarely on the individual: it is a personal failure based on family breakdown, educational failure, unemployment, and indebtedness that has allegedly broken Britain, nothing to do with a system which positions and reproduces class inequality (McKenzie, 2015).

## **The moral consequence of class**

Today, the term white working-class seems to have become shorthand, in the political discourse, for people who seem to have an entirely different set of values to the middle-class (Hanley, 2016); with the predominant view of the working-class as stupid, ignorant and racist (Jones, 2012). In wider political discourses, the white working-class, in particular, have become 'the left behind' with a sense of loss that began in the era of mass immigration has left 'them' uniformly bewildered by change (Hanley, 2016). Even today, strong social class stereotypes exist, and in this way the working-class are never free of the judgements of real, or imaginary others, that position them not just as different, but as inferior or inadequate (Skeggs, 1997). Social class can be used to describe what people do i.e. their jobs, habits and hobbies, but it also shapes what other people expect from them in terms of their personality traits, life choices, aspirations and motivations. Typically, according to Durante and Fiske (2017), the middle-class are stereotyped as intelligent, ambitious and hardworking, whereas those from lower socioeconomic groups are often seen as unmotivated, unintelligent and lazy, which can only serve to undermine the self-efficacy of those from lower socio-economic groups. This 'othering' affects people's relationships, experiences and practices, and can have a lasting impact on the way people live their lives and treat one another.

So, class matters not only because of differences in material wealth and economic security, but because it also affects our access to things that matter to us, including relationships, experiences and practices that we have reason to value (Sayer, 2005).

Sayer (2005) suggests that this is the moral significance of class, and it is this that influences everyday interactions within and between class groups. It is this aspect of class that is the principal concern for this research. He contends that people are most likely to be concerned about class in terms of recognition and respect, rather than in purely economic terms and 'class concern' is also about having access to the practices and ways of living that are valued, and class of course renders this access highly unequal' (Sayer 2005, p.948).

Furthermore, as Skeggs (1997) has pointed out, working-class women are particularly vulnerable in an unequal system because they are born into structures of inequality (class and gender) which can circumscribe their movements through space. It was thinking about the link between the unequal distribution of capital and the subjective experience of recognition that led me to the theoretical frameworks outlined in chapter four.

## **Education – a theoretical perspective**

Education, or at least educational attainment, is still generally regarded by society as a means through which upward social mobility can occur. And as Bourdieu (1990) points out academic capital is often socially determined. There is still a 'great deal of path dependence in the evolution of inequalities' (Sayer, 2005 p.78) and, while some inequalities in educational attainment have improved over the last 40 years, those linked to social and economic inequalities still persist to the current day: social class continues to be the single most important influence on educational achievement in Britain. A recent report (Kirby and Cullinane, 2016) found that white British students who have FSM (Free School Meals), the current indicator of socio-economic disadvantage, are also the lowest performing ethnic group at GCSE (2016). And within the last ten years the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2010) have identified that, in the United Kingdom, parents' wealth and level of education strongly influenced their children's prospects of higher education and access to a good salary.

Since the 1960s, a considerable amount of time and money has been spent trying to determine the reasons for the persistent failure of working-class children in the education system. Theories have been wide-ranging: theories of genetic difference; social, cultural, and linguistic deprivation; and, social factors relating to home background, in particular mother-child relationships, have all been offered as explanations at various times (Plummer, 2000).

From my perspective as a 'working-class' teacher educator, I am concerned with the way class is still reproduced through education. As Bourdieu (1977) has argued, students in school are shaped by their experiences to internalise or at least accept the subjectivity and class positioning that leads to the reproduction of existing power relationships and social and economic structures. Indeed, Bourdieu (1984) identified the education system as the most important factor in the unequal distribution of cultural and linguistic capital, both through its unfairly weighted official curriculum, which tests middle-class knowledge, and also through its equally powerful hidden curriculum which legitimises the cultural knowledge, values and meanings of the bourgeoisie class. Over the course of his work, Bourdieu examined the ways in which schools legitimate certain groups through the language, knowledge and patterns of interaction, which are valued and deemed to be 'proper', and argued that the education system functions in such a way that legitimises class inequalities (Bourdieu, 1977). arguing that success in the education system is facilitated by the possession of cultural capital and of higher class habitus (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Bourdieu's (1977) view was that higher-class students gain higher grade educational credentials than lower-class students, because cultural capital is inculcated in the higher-class home. This enables higher-class individuals to maintain their class position and legitimates the dominant position which higher-class individuals typically go on to hold. Bourdieu (Ibid) argued that when some lower-class individuals succeed in the education system, they strengthen the structure by contributing to the appearance of meritocracy, in which success is based on merit. Because of this view, Bourdieu's work has generated controversy: in his approach, school seemingly reproduces class structure in a relatively unproblematic way, with students being passive recipients of the system. While I acknowledge that this model does present a picture that is

deterministic, there is no denying that education today still functions as a system that favours the middle-class.

I strongly believe that education, in both its formal context, (i.e. schooling) in which 'learning is the result of teaching' (Illich, 2010, p. 28) and in its broadest sense, should contribute to personal growth and freedom (Freire, 1996). Biesta (2010), drawing on Freire (1996), presents a vision of the purpose of education that functions across three domains: qualification, socialisation and subjectification that takes learning beyond what some people would argue are the proper and legitimate dimensions of school education. He argues that while qualifications are important, because they prepare children and young people for their lives in complex modern societies, education is also a way in which society initiates young people in the traditions and the ways of being and doing, through socialisation (Biesta, 2010). He argued that the socialisation dimension of education may not be explicit but it still has a socialising effect, through the 'hidden curriculum' - the transmission of norms values and beliefs conveyed in the classroom and the social environment (Biesta, 2012). Biesta (2010) contends that education should operate in a third dimension, 'subjectification', which is concerned with the way in which education impacts on the person. He is keen to point out that subjectification and socialisation are not the same. He argues that socialisation has to do with how we become part of existing orders, whereas subjectification is the opposite, it is more about how we can exist 'outside' of such orders, acknowledging the uniqueness of each individual human being. Biesta (2012) argues that whenever formal learning takes place, there is always informal learning happening too.

For me, the education system is a milieu of institutional, personal and social forces that are neither exclusively dominating nor liberating. This raises questions about how education contributes to the formation of certain 'qualities' of the person. Thinking about my own experience, while of course qualifications and socialisation have played a huge part in the formation of my 'self' and identity, I am particularly interested in the idea of the subjective experience of education in how it has shaped who I am and who I think I can be. The notion of the subjectification dimension has been hugely influential in the way that I approach my own teaching.

But as Mills (1959/2000) points out, people rarely see their personal dilemmas in terms of the larger social and historical context, and draws attention to the importance of seeing the connections between individual experience and agency and social structure. For this reason, I now want to set the historical socio-economic, political and contextual territory of the research.

## **Neoliberal Britain**

The reality of a modern Britain is based on a free-market economy, driven by a neoliberal ideology. In the recent 'critical' literature, Harvey (2005) presents a wide-ranging definition of neoliberalism that I think is worth representing in full here

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defence, police and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture. State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly in democracies) for their own benefit, (Harvey 2005:2).

Harvey sees neoliberalism as a distinctive economic theory which aligns with his belief that the world has experienced 'an emphatic turn towards neoliberalism in political-economic practices and thinking since the 1970s' (Ibid.).

Neoliberal discourses have now established the social 'norms' in contemporary society, and neoliberalism has become so pervasive that people seldom even recognise it as an ideology anymore (Monbiot, 2016). Neoliberalism redefines citizens as consumers, whose democratic choices are best exercised by buying and selling, a process that rewards merit and punishes inefficiency. In this discourse, inequality could be recast as a good thing; a reward for efficacy which trickles down to enrich everyone's lives (Monbiot, 2016). Governments often use neoliberal crises as both an excuse and as an opportunity: to cut taxes, privatise remaining public services, deregulate corporations, and to withdraw the state from many areas of social provision, including health and education which has led to further disempowerment of the poor (Monbiot, 2016; Jones, 2015). 'Not to subscribe to these beliefs is to be outside today's Establishment [sic]' (Jones, 2015, p. 6).

Since 2010, austerity (a reduction in the structural deficit of the government) – a key pillar of the Conservative economic policy, has necessitated, in the Conservative government's view, much tighter spending controls and a reduction of total public spending. This period has seen a reduction in welfare benefits; in NHS funding; and in the number of police officers; as well as the implementation of new models of funding for schools and of public sector pay restraint. This has meant that teachers, nurses and police officers have all seen their take home pay fall or stagnate in real terms (Bryson and Forth, 2017).

The past two years, in particular, have been an unprecedented era for the social and political context in Britain. In June 2016, voters in the United Kingdom opted to leave the European Union by a majority of 52 per cent to 48 per cent, and a snap election called by the Conservative Prime Minister in April 2017 resulted in a hung parliament, with unexpected gains for the opposition, the Labour Party. It seems as if there is a loss of confidence in the establishment and we are a now nation ill at ease with itself (Jones, 2015).

A recent study by Friedman, Laurison and Macmillan (2017) suggested that rates of both upward, and to a lesser extent downward, social mobility now represent the norm and not the exception in contemporary Britain, and that strong barriers to

equality of opportunity persist. They found (2017) that access and progression within Britain's traditional professions such as medicine, law, journalism, and academia remain dominated by those from advantaged backgrounds and evidence of a powerful and largely unacknowledged 'class pay gap' within the professions; those from working-class backgrounds earn on average £6,800 less than colleagues from professional and managerial backgrounds. Although they argued this is partly explained by differences in education and occupational segregation, even when comparing individuals with the same education, occupation and level of experience, those from working-class backgrounds are still paid £2,242 less than more privileged colleagues. This penalty is exacerbated for upwardly mobile women and ethnic minorities who face a 'double disadvantage' in earnings (Friedman, Laurison and Macmillan, 2017)

A recent study by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) reveals that income inequality has fallen over the past 10 years despite the economic recession and the associated austerity measures (Cribb, *et al.*, 2017), which contrasts with my lived experience as someone who witnesses increasing signs of deprivation and poverty in the city where I live. But as Cribb *et al.*, (2017) argue, small changes in the average can mask significant differences for some groups of the population; in particular, they found poverty is concentrated in certain localities; for example, average income in the highest-income region of Great Britain (South East) is around 25 per cent higher than that in the poorest region (West Midlands). The report also noted that it was not only the traditional poor who were struggling economically: whilst the proportion of net income coming from benefits has fallen from 73 per cent to 61 per cent over the last 20 years for the 20 per cent poorest children, middle-income children now get 30 per cent of household income from benefits, compared with 22 per cent twenty years ago (Cribb, *et al.*, 2017).

## **Education within neoliberal Britain**

Ball (2013) points out that education policy is now almost entirely subsumed within the overall strategy of public services reform, and issues around social equality are

often subsumed in more general policy strategies which focus on preparing young people for life in a multicultural society. Certainly, over the past 50 years the education system has become increasingly dominated by a neoliberal agenda that focuses on a marketised system of education, in which providers in every sector of the education system compete against each other for students and status. It has changed 'from a national system locally administered to a national system nationally administered' (Ainley, 2001, in Ball, 2013, p.194) and back again. Ball (2013) asserts the entrepreneurial-competitive regimes in educational policy and increased subordination of education to 'the economic' over the past forty years have played a key role in eroding 'professional-ethical regimes and their value systems' (2013, p.172). In this way parents and students are repositioned as consumers and entreated to compare schools in terms of published performance indicators which has increased competition between educational settings leading to highly prescriptive systems of accountability, performance indicators, inspections, league tables and achievement targets (Ball, 2013).

Linking current educational policy back to equality, Ball (2013) argues that neoliberal practices, despite the rhetoric to suggest otherwise, have done nothing to reduce inequality between socio-economic groups and some minority ethnic groups. The government have been less willing to acknowledge and engage with issues of poverty and structural inequality because an even greater emphasis is being placed on attributing educational failure to deficient parenting and underperforming schools (Ball 2013). It seems today that there are dual expectations for educational outcomes: for the professional middle-class, higher education has become a standard expectation and is seen 'as something within the grasp of *all* their children [emphasis in the original], whilst amongst the working-classes higher education remains an 'exceptional experience' (Scott, 1990, in Plummer, 2000, p.39); this remains true today, especially in the context of higher tuition fees.



## **Teacher education in neoliberal society**

Central to this thesis is the field of teacher education. It is this context that presented me with a significant clash of ideology that prompted me to challenge my assumptions about the purpose of education and the impact of class on educational experiences and outcomes. Furthermore, I have experienced feelings of exclusion and feelings of belonging and solidarity simultaneously within this setting. Working at a university has also provided me with time and space to read, think and reflect about what it is to be an educated person from the working-class.

Entry into my research, in 2011, coincided with a change of government and a change of policy in all areas of education, including; higher education (Browne, 2010); initial teacher education (Department for Education, 2011); and schools (Department for Education, 2010). Rarely, in England, had there ever been a period of more government intervention in education policy and practice.

Whilst the teaching profession in England has rarely enjoyed the 'licensed autonomy' that occupations such as medicine and law have traditionally had, until the mid 1970s it had experienced a considerable degree of autonomy insofar as the state did not intervene in the content of either teacher 'training' or the work of teachers in schools (Ball, 2008). The first significant threat to this was Callaghan's speech at Ruskin College in 1976, it was unusual for a British Prime Minister to devote a major speech to the topic of education and this speech 'gave powerful encouragement to the 'discourse of derision' being aimed at schools and teachers' (Ball, 1997, p. 73) by industrialists and sections of the media. In this speech he challenged the monopoly of teacher educators and educationalists about the purposes of education and the methods used.

During the 1980s and 1990s successive Conservative governments (1979-1997) revolutionised Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in England and Wales, re-introducing market forces within the public sector in general, and within education in particular. In the 1990s, the Conservative government introduced a series of measures to regulate teachers which included initial teacher education competency based

assessment (now known as the Teachers' Standards). They also experimented with several schemes to speed up and loosen up entry into qualified teacher status, which included the introduction of 'school-based training' (Ball 1997). Before then, the vast majority of teacher education in England has been carried out by higher education institutions in partnership with schools, with trainees receiving both on-the-job practical experience within schools, and teaching within the university to develop in-depth subject and pedagogical knowledge and a theoretical underpinning to the process of learning and teaching. The situation for the teaching profession did not improve with the election of the New Labour government in 1997; in the circular 'Teaching high status high standards' (1998) New Labour introduced a more prescriptive curriculum for teacher training, based on teaching competencies, 'finally eradicating the intellectual and disciplinary foundations for teacher education' (Ball, 1997, p.145). It was also the New Labour government that introduced the Graduate Teacher Programme in 1998 and Teach First in 2002.

The establishment of these new school-based routes into teaching saw the end of the professional monopoly held by higher education institutions, giving greater government control of the education system.

Within the neoliberal agenda, there is a high level of distrust of the academic profession. Within weeks of their election in 2010, the Conservative-led coalition government produced a white paper to set out how they were going to improve teaching and learning in schools in England by placing the responsibility for teacher education (or initial teacher training (ITT) as they prefer to call it) firmly in the hands of schools. The Importance of Teaching (Department for Education, 2010) stated that the government was going to

Reform initial teacher training, to increase the proportion of time trainees spend in the classroom, focusing on core teaching skills (Department for Education, 2010, p.9)

School Direct, the latest teacher education initiative in England, heralded the expansion of school-based initial teacher training. Within this route, schools are able to select and recruit their own trainees with an expectation that trainees will be

employed by the school or partnership of schools once they are qualified. Schools are free to choose which teacher training provider to work with, agree the content and focus of the training programme depending on the needs of both the trainees and the school, and decide how funding will be split between the school and the training provider (Department for Education website). In this model of teacher education, schools have much more control of student teacher recruitment and training (Department for Education, 2011).

In addition, to make the market even more competitive, individual schools or Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) have been encouraged to become accredited providers of initial and in-service training that other schools can purchase from them. This puts them in direct competition with universities. Whilst this change in the delivery model has helped strengthen many university school partnerships (Brown, Rowley and Smith, 2016), the pace of this change in the allocation of training places has been rapid; between 2012–13 and 2015–16 the number of places allocated directly to universities has decreased by 23 per cent (Universities UK, 2014). The speed and magnitude of the change has led to questions being asked about the long-term viability of delivering initial teacher education through higher education institutions (Universities UK, 2014). Furthermore, any criticism of the proposed reforms from teachers' unions, academics, and professional associations has led to accusations of a 'kind of 'progressive conservatism' that is taken to be resistant to change and 'good sense'" (Ball, 2013, p.111). In his now infamous article in the Daily Mail, the then Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove wrote

..... there are millions of talented young people being denied the opportunity to succeed as they deserve. Far too many are having their potential thwarted by a new set of Enemies of Promise. .... The new Enemies of Promise are a set of politically motivated individuals who have been actively trying to prevent millions of our poorest children getting the education they need. But who is responsible for this failure? Who are the guilty men and women who have deprived a generation of the knowledge they need? Who are the modern Enemies of Promise? They are all academics who have helped run the university departments of education responsible for developing curricula and teacher training courses. (Gove, 2013)

Whilst the effect of the recent reforms has been less severe than we, as university based teacher educators first thought, the impact on teacher education providers has still been significant at a macro, meso and micro level.

The steady but certain erosion of the involvement of universities in initial teacher education is a constant source of tension for me, not just because I am worried about the certainty of my job but because I am concerned about the intellectual and professional status of future generations of teachers. Not only have the reforms had an effect on where student teachers are prepared to be teachers, they have also influenced what and how student teachers receive preparation for teaching.

My own institution, like many others, has needed to adapt to meet the Government's neo-liberal agenda with its focus on the notion that teaching is a craft, best learnt as an apprentice observing a master craftsman or woman (Gove 2016) and technical rationalist<sup>4</sup> mechanisms in which student teachers work to meet a set of competency based standards. The debate around what type of knowledge teachers need has raged on for decades. Twenty-five years ago, Lawlor (1990), launched an attack on the way teachers were trained; suggesting that only two kinds of preparation for teachers are needed: a deep understanding of their subject, and closely supervised on-the-job training. This model, in which teachers are cast as technician or craft worker, looks remarkably similar to prevailing ideology of teacher 'training' today. Within a school-based approach, the model rests on the assumption that 'more time spent in schools

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<sup>4</sup> Technical rationality - Schön (1983) defined technical rationality as the 'positivistic epistemology of practice' (p. 31), the view that 'professional activity consists in instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique' (Schön, 1983, p. 21). Technical rationality maintains that all knowledge can be attained through systematic study and all propositions can be assessed for their truth-value either by way of empirical observation or through a rigid application of rational analysis. As practical knowledge, the know-how acquired through experience does not fit neatly into either analytic or synthetic schemas – it is relegated to the role of providing instrumental knowledge; in other words, practical knowledge can merely guide people in their actions, and aid them in selecting the best means to achieve a desired end (Schön, 1983)

inevitably and unproblematically leads to better and 'more relevant' learning' (Brown, Rowley and Smith, 2016, p.22). Thus, student teachers' pedagogical knowledge is shaped by demands of the policies and structured frameworks as enacted within schools (Ibid., p. 7). In this model, argue Aronowitz and Giroux (1986), teachers are being reduced to mere technicians who are 'relegated to instrumental tasks that limit the possibilities for oppositional discourse and social practices' ...and 'Pedagogy is reduced to the implementation of taxonomies that subordinate knowledge to forms of methodological reification' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986, p.24). Conversely, as universities try to respond to the demand of partnership schools for 'preparation for practice' there has been a decline in the more academic elements of teacher preparation, traditionally located within universities (Brown, Rowley and Smith (2016).

This contradicts sharply with my own ideas of higher education and learning to be a teacher. Like Winch, Oancea and Orchard (2015), I argue that there are three interconnected and complementary aspects of teachers' professional knowledge: situated understanding or phronesis; technical knowledge; and critical reflection. So for me, it is right that teacher education should take place in partnership with schools, but where both parties contributions are equally valued. Schools are best placed to support phronesis and technical knowledge whilst universities should offer a space which allow student teachers to engage in conversations so that they are able to reflect. I think there is a moral imperative for student teachers to engage in opportunities to reflect, observe and consider. This is explored in more depth in chapter seven.

### **Higher education within a neoliberal context**

However, for those of us who are teacher educators, we are not only at the mercy of what happens within education policy regarding schools and initial teacher education, but we are also subject to changes in higher education policy too.

Correspondingly, within the past 50 years the higher education system has undergone significant changes. The Robbins Report (1963) heralded a period of expansion in higher education which saw participation in higher education increase from three per cent in 1960 to around 41 per cent in 2014-15 (the latest data available) (Department for Education, 2016). This expansion, coupled with the introduction of tuition fees in 2004, has led to increased competition between higher education institutions, within a marketised system which sees students increasingly positioned as customers, and providers competing with each other and working to improve the extent to which they meet customer demands (Barnett, 2011). It is true that there are more people from disadvantaged backgrounds attending university, but the same is true of entrants from students from the middle-class; so the relative chance of someone from a less advantaged background attending university has changed very little (Ibid). The gap between those students on free school meals and those not on free school meals, aged 15 years, remains at 18 percentage points; with an estimated 24 per cent of pupils who were in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) entering Higher Education by age 19 in 2014/15, in comparison to 41 per cent of non-FSM pupils. And the gap between those who attend state school and independent school is even more significant; with an estimated 65 per cent of students who took A Level and/or equivalent qualifications in independent schools and colleges progressing on to the most selective Higher Education providers by age 19, compared to 23 per cent of those from state-funded schools and colleges in the 2014/15 academic year. So, despite the fact that in today's society, universities are increasingly promoted as instruments of social mobility (Universities UK, 2014), the role of higher education in generating advantage in terms of status, occupational entry and earnings in the UK is still widely contested (Wakeling and Savage, 2015).

In 2010, the Browne report promised a paradigm shift towards a completely marketised vision of higher education in which the universities are providers of services, students are the (rational) consumers of those services, and the state plays the role of the regulator (Collini, 2012). Browne (2010) maintained that 'Increasing competition for students will mean that institutions will have stronger incentives to focus on improving teaching quality. If they are not able to attract enough students, their funding will decrease,' (2010, p.48). The report (Browne, 2010) established

modes of governance, financing and evaluation that put higher education values and interests more akin with corporate ideals argued Giroux, (2014). Furedi (2011) contended that advocates of marketisation claim that this process will turn higher education into a more flexible and efficient institution and will make the university sector more responsive to the needs of society, the economy, students and parents. But what we now have is a system of a 'lightly regulated market' (Collini, 2012) in which consumer demand is driving what is offered by universities.

The way that educational degrees are funded has also had a huge impact on the university sector. The almost complete withdrawal of the annual block grant that government made to universities, to underwrite their teaching, signaled a redefinition of higher education and the retreat of the state responsibility for it (Collini, 2012). In its place, universities have been left to charge different amounts for different choices, although when it was introduced a maximum of £9000 was announced.

The current data shows a mixed picture of the impact of the Browne (2010) reforms. Different institutions and different groups of students have been affected in different ways, but a number of key issues have surfaced. There has been a reduction in part-time undergraduate and postgraduate students, a decline in mature entrants, (all typical of our student cohort) and reduced levels of interest in some subjects (HEFCE, 2013). So, whilst the neoliberal agenda may seem like a positive step for people from other social, economic and cultural backgrounds expansion has not, unfortunately, led to greater equality (Savage, 2015).

Collini (2012) suggests that the impact of the Browne review will almost certainly lead to a stratified system of higher education, with those institutions at the upper end of the hierarchy offering a wide range of courses and commanding higher fees and research grants, whilst those at the bottom end of the league table concentrating on vocational courses.

Trends within contemporary universities can be seen in an emphasis on 'quality assurance' and accountability measures. I am saddened by the policy-dictated changes in role as a higher education with the emphasis on technical rationalism and

instrumentalism. As a consequence of this 'economic Darwinism' the civic and intellectual no longer drive higher education (despite what institutions might say); instead the most important values of higher education are tied to the need for credentials (Giroux, 2014). It seems, that driven by an overriding policy for economic competitiveness, the social purposes of education have all but collapsed (Ball, 2008, p.11). As a consequence, higher education has become more conservative, and academic freedom more compromised (Giroux, 2014, p.193). And it goes without saying that this neoliberal ideology runs contrary to what Newman (1852/1959) identified as the ideal university in which the university is a community of thinkers, engaging in intellectual pursuits not for any external purpose, but as an end in itself.

Returning to the fragile institution described in the last chapter, it seems to me that there is a systematic denigration of post 1992 institutions, particularly those like mine that offer professional and vocational programmes. This misrecognition (Honneth, 1995, 2007) anchored in social structures systematically denies institutions like mine full participation in the market place.

This is the larger social, political and historical context within which I work which all have an effect on both my 'self' and identity. Before I go onto explain how they have influenced who I am, how I am seen and how I feel I have been seen – I introduce the theoretical framework of self and identity below.

## **Self and identity - the theoretical framework**

The literature around self and identity presents a bewildering array of theoretical tensions. In a comprehensive review of the literature Oyserman, Elmore and Smith (2012) found that self and identity are sometimes used interchangeably and at other times used to refer to different things; and this is often different across, and within, publications. They also suggested that sometimes the terms are used to simply to refer to membership of a social or demographic group like class or gender; or in reference to the process of making sense of the world; or to the consequences of social



contexts on a person's beliefs and perceptions about the self. This ambiguity also extends to where self and identity is singular or plural and whether there is an enduring self or whether the self is context sensitive (Ibid.).

Mead's (1934) theory of mind, self and society, founded on ideas from symbolic interactionists, described the concept of self in terms of its direct relationship to other aspects of social life. He suggested that the mind and self emerge from social processes of communication (symbolic interaction) (Mead, 1934). Mead (1934) contended that the self is not there from birth, but that the self, though stable, is a continuous concept which emerges from social interactions, such as observing and interacting with others, responding to others' opinions about oneself, and internalising external opinions and internal feelings about oneself. In essence, people come to understand who they are as they compare and contrast themselves to others. Mead (1934) used the concept of the 'looking glass self' to describe the mental self-image that people develop as they see themselves through the eyes of the other and this is a central aspect to the formation of the self.

Nias (1989), drawing on Mead, described the concept of self as simultaneously socially constructed (the 'me') and autonomous (the 'I'). The 'me', the 'multiple' or 'situational self' 'may alter as we interact with different people in varying contexts' (1989, p.203) whereas the 'I', the 'substantial self' is more entrenched as it relates to 'a set of self-defining beliefs, values and attitudes' (Ibid.) which links to my own experience of recognition. For me, this notion of the substantial self aligns closely with Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) notion of the primary habitus. From this definition, it seems to me that one can have two different appreciations of the self, which can be in conflict: the substantial self and the situational self.

Jackson (2007), also referring to Mead's theory (1934), made the analogy between the self as

a complex, many stranded cord 'running through our lives, but one which does not necessarily stay the same since the threads that comprise it can be frayed or strengthened and are continually being spliced or woven in with other threads, remade over time (Jackson, 2007, p. 7)

This model provides a useful framework for the narrative constructions of self; it allows for human agency, eschews any notion of a fixed self, and acknowledges the reality of past events and experiences (Jackson, 2010). While it acknowledges that the self is an 'experiencing subject' with its own sense of 'fragmentations and coherence of self' (Stanley, 1993) there is an implication that the self is forever changing according to the situation and in interaction with others; this for me represents the identity. Furthermore, ever since the concept of identity was taken up as a central issue by Erikson (1959/1980), its definition has been understood not just as a psychological but specifically as a psychosocial concept, that is, 'the social scientific attempt to understand the subject as an interface between the psychological and the social (Winlow and Hall, 2009, p.286), i.e. explicitly including the combination and interaction between the individual and the social environment.

Jenkins (2008) brings some clarity, he contends that whilst acknowledging the mutuality of the concepts, self and identity are separate; the self is our subjective understanding of who we are; it is 'the individual's private experience of herself or himself' (Jenkins, 2008, p. 50) what Nias (1989) would refer to as the 'I' the 'substantial self'. Identity is the socially constructed label through which we, as people are understood (Jenkins 2008) what Nias (1989) would refer to as the 'situational self'. So my position in this thesis is that I will use the term self to indicate when I am writing about my substantial self, and identity when I am writing about the situational self.

In the thesis I move backwards and forwards between the private spaces in which I attend to my inner thoughts and feelings, and the public spaces defined by my awareness of my 'self' as a social object that is affected by and has an effect on others (Fenigstein, Scheier and Buss, 1975). Important for this thesis is one further feature of Mead's symbolic interactionism: contextualised in Mead's theory of intersubjectivity, the 'generalised other' a concept he uses to refer to the collective body from which the individual sees the self (Boylorne and Orbe, 2014). He argued that self-consciousness is developed through action in the social domain that is completed in personal reflection (Mead, 1934).

The concepts of self and identity are significant in this research because in confronting myself, I aim to confront both my 'self' and my identity as they are shaped and formed by the 'other' (Weis, 1995). I am seeking an explanation of why I feel illegitimate in both my working-class and middle-class environments. These three concepts of self, identity and other are pivotal to the rest of the research and are referred to throughout. The next chapter expands on these concepts to illuminate how they are important to me, at a personal level, and in the research.

## **Chapter 3: It's all about me – gender, class and teacher education**

The previous chapter introduced the three main social constructs that frame the research. This chapter brings these constructs from the public to the private. It sets the structure within which I begin to confront myself.

The title for this chapter came from a conference paper I wrote in collaboration with my PhD supervisor in 2012. The paper considered the complex relationship between the researcher self and the research process (Fine, 1994). In the initial planning stages of the research process, borne out of a conversation with my supervisor which subsequently changed the focus of my research, I took a reflexive turn. I began to explore the problematic nature of the self - bending back on the self to look deeply at self-other interactions within the field (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). In my endeavours to confront the self in the present, I found it difficult to ignore my early experiences as a child growing up in a lower socio-economic group and the influence this was having not only on my research but also on my teaching. I was, I now recognise, as Mills (1959) suggested, trying to understand my own experiences through the experiences of others. At this point, and as I recognised that my own story as 'une miraculée' was an important story to tell, so the research became all about me.

However, this story is not designed to be a solipsistic account of a bildungsroman<sup>5</sup> - it presents an opportunity to examine the moral significance of class (Sayer, 2005) on identity formation from the perspective of a working-class woman who has successfully managed class transition. Whilst the discussion about my 'self' and

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<sup>5</sup> According to the Encyclopedia Britannica (Encyclopedia Britannica, no date) The German word Bildungsroman means 'novel of education' or 'novel of formation'. Bildungsroman is a class of novel that deals with the maturation process, with how and why the protagonist develops as he does, both morally and psychologically.

identity is largely structured around class, there is another story under the surface demanding to be heard: the relationship with my mum. Of course my familial capital and in particular my relationship with my mum, which is not associated to class relations, has played an integral part in who I am. As the reader will determine, I have only ventured so far with this deeply intimate and emotional aspect of my story and have made a conscious and deliberate decision to frame it within class relations to protect both my mum and me.

## **The good enough daughter**

When I confront myself multiple roles come to mind, including the fact that I am female, I am white, I am middle-aged, I am someone's daughter, sister, wife, and friend. I am a teacher educator, a senior lecturer in a University, a PhD student and an 'early academic'. Some of these roles constitute my substantial self and others help to create my identity, how I am seen by others and how I see myself. It is the tension between my 'self' and my identity that I am trying to problematise in the research process because it has an impact on my ontological and epistemological beliefs.

The kind of person we are is tied closely to our relationship with our parents, and in particular with our mothers (Lawler, 2000) and this is a significant element of my own story. Lawler (2000) and Honneth (1995, 2007), introduced in the next chapter, both draw on Winnicott's (1965) theory of object relations to determine the importance of intersubjective relations in infancy, with an emphasis on the relationship with the mother. Lawler (2000) in particular, draws on Winnicott to suggest that children embody the hopes, desires and fears of adults in the social world to form the self.

I am the oldest of two children born out of wedlock. Life was harsh on a social, economic and emotional level as my mum, an unmarried teen, was bringing us up alone, a relatively rare situation in the 1960s. To present a picture of my early life I

have drawn on Townsend's (1979) definition of poverty which encapsulates my own experience of childhood

Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities (Townsend, 1979, p.31).

Fifty years ago when I was born, unmarried mothers were often consigned to homes for unmarried mothers or mental institutions, and deprived of their children; mothers who had children illegitimately (never married) were considered immoral. The stigmatisation of mothers of illegitimate children, and their children, in the 1960s and 1970s was real (Marsden, 1973), growing up as the daughter of an unmarried mother meant that I grew up knowing that my family was abnormal (Skeggs, 1997). The practice of stereotyping and stigmatising single mothers is still a prevailing narrative and my mum, like the working-class women in Skeggs' study, was 'delegitimated through associations of non-respectability' (Skeggs, 1997, p.162). As recently as 2011, the Prime Minister of the time (David Cameron) blamed the civil unrest that summer on 'families without fathers that were causing a moral collapse in British society' (Thane and Evans, 2012, p.206). Debates have continued to define the poor in terms of cultural relations which are transmitted from bad parents, and especially bad mothers, onto their bad and abnormal children (Lawler, 2000). As Edwards and Caballero suggest

Mothers bringing up children without a resident man have long been seen as transgressing various boundaries and denoting the state of the nation in some way. ...lone mothers have been regarded as members of an underclass, spawning anti-social children and corroding the nation (Edwards and Caballero, 2011, p.531)

Driven by feelings of insecurity, doubt, indignation and resentment based on imagined, and sometimes real judgements made by superior 'others', I am certain that my mum came to 'know her place' (Skeggs, 1997), and this has certainly had an impact

on how I see myself within society. As Dowd (1999) pointed out, the negative social construction of the single mother is not a burden borne solely by the mother

Children have lost the most from our stigmatizing of single-parent families. ...the lack of support and condemnation of single parents, based on the stigma associated with them, bears most heavily on the children (Dowd, p. 1999, p. xiii)

The relationship with my mum as I was growing up has had a huge impact on who I am today. Whilst initially my mum's longing to be seen to be of value in society propelled my class transition, like many of the mothers in Lawler's (2000) study, my mum found it increasingly difficult over the years to accept who I was becoming. I have married, and have climbed socially and am now perceived to be middle-class. My beliefs and values are no longer congruent to my mum's way of thinking. The way we see the world is entirely different. My relationship with my mum has suffered with long periods of estrangement over the years right up until the present time. Much of our adult life has been spent in a 'spiral of emotional conflict' (Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1982 in West, 2010, p.154) which has resonated and continues to resonate throughout both our lives. My mum is no longer present in my life, but I still carry the burden of being expensive, ungrateful and not good-enough (Steedman, 1986).

It became clear through the dynamic process of writing my early auto/biography that aside from the origination of the habitus, based on class position, the influence of the relationship with my mum, and the impact this may have had on my sense of self, was omnipresent. While I tried to ignore it during the writing process, the internal presence of my mum hovered just on the periphery of my consciousness for a long while, an ever present other to whom I was continually responding (Josselson, 1996). So I decided to be bold and explore it. This is done with some trepidation in chapter six. Estrangement has brought with it what Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001, p. 161) have termed 'survival guilt' a strong sense of indebtedness for all the sacrifices my mum made on my/our behalf, but also a powerful sense of loss. This sense of loss that comes through unwanted social and psychological distance is rarely recognised in research about social mobility; this is explored in the empirical narrative.

However, despite this, I have grown up and been academically and professionally successful in my own right. While I am happily married to James, I am independent financially and emotionally and this is an important part of both my 'self' and my identity. Furthermore, as a lecturer in a university I am afforded the privilege to engage in academic study; this has given me the opportunity to conduct research from a working-class perspective.

The story in this research spans just over fifty years. During that time there has been significant change in society - social, economic, political and cultural. Abortion and homosexuality have become legal, capital punishment has been abolished, the UK has become more culturally and ethnically diverse, and Acts of Parliament have been introduced to improve the position of women, people from minority ethnic groups and those with disability. Despite this, a recent report by the OECD (2015) shows that the UK is among the less equal of the world's developed countries.

## **Gender and me**

From being born into gender, race and class relations, I have come to occupy the associated social position as a woman, white and working-class (Moi, 1991) with the associated ways of understanding.

Wherever I go, and whatever situation I go into involves gender, not because I am a feminist activist, but because I am a woman, I recognise that as an important part of my 'self' and my identity.

It is 100 years since women over the age of 30 years got the vote, but gender inequality is still an enduring challenge globally, national and locally, with women and girls continuing to lag behind men and boys on key rights, opportunities and well-being (British Council, 2016). The report's summary highlights that in the British educational system, girls enjoy higher educational achievements but that there is still a difference between the subjects chosen by girls and boys at secondary and



postsecondary level, with little progress on encouraging more girls into better-paid career paths or into those subjects traditionally thought to be 'boys' subjects, science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Legislation that makes discrimination illegal means that there has been a shift towards women's more equal participation in the formal economy (The British Council, 2016), but research for the report also found that the undervaluing of work traditionally done by women, combined with austerity policies applied to the UK's social infrastructure, have combined to halt women's progress towards economic equality. And finally the report (2016) argues that while there has been significant progress in women's equal participation in political life in the UK, men remain over-represented in almost all positions of power and decision-making, and a sexist, sometimes hostile culture in the media impedes women's advancement.

Feminist approaches to gender oppression in the 1960s to the 1980s argued that women's oppression stemmed not only from society, imposed on women from the outside, but also from the inside by themselves and other family members (Stanley and Wise, 1993). Stanley and Wise (1993) argued that gender is inculcated during the socialisation process, mostly by the mother who behaves differently dependent on whether the child is a boy or girl. This process of socialisation or, as Bourdieu (1990) might call it, the formation of the habitus, is seen as a self-perpetuating system which derives its needs from capitalist patriarchal society (Stanley and Wise, 1993) which results in gender typical behaviours. As it is mothers who are mostly involved (in my case the only parent involved) in socialising their children, it is the mother who is primarily involved in producing sexually stereotyped children (Stanley and Wise, 1993). For many feminists in this second wave of feminism, this socialisation was the means by which boys and girls became stereotypically feminine and masculine people which, in turn, perpetuated the sexual division of labour produced and reproduced within the family and wider society.

As I have argued elsewhere the education system is also a means of social and cultural reproduction and I distinctly remember when I was growing up gender identity was constructed in schools and the workplace. Even though I attended secondary school at the same time as the Sex Discrimination Act (1975). There were traditional

expectations of girls undertaking domestic science, which as far as I can remember consisted of cooking and sewing, whilst the boys did woodwork and design and technology. And when I first started work, the world of banking and finance was definitely gendered. The management was male and the administrators and front facing staff were female. As McRobbie (2007) maintained, in the 1970s and 1980s most women were pressurised towards a feminine role, and as Griffin (1985) argued, working-class girls had it forced on them earlier because the culture of working-class girls at that time was a response to the material limitations imposed on them as a result of their gender and their class. This can be seen in my own auto/biography.

However, as will be seen my mum had every reason to distrust men and eschewed any notion of gender stereotyping as my brother and I were growing up. Coupled with not having a father figure around when I was growing up; I was never really subjected to 'male power' (Steedman, 1986, p.19). Of course, like Steedman (1986), I do accept the idea at an intellectual level.

To attempt to understand my experience completely independently of gender issues would have failed to capture the complexities of my intersubjective experiences. It would have been remiss of me to fail to acknowledge the subjective experience of being a woman, at least at a macro level. However central to this thesis, is the argument presented by Wolf (2013) that whereas in the past women of all classes, in all societies, shared their explicitly female concerns, in today's climate, it makes no sense to treat women as a homogenous group.

## **Intersectionality**

There is no denying that being a woman has had an influence on access to economic, social, and cultural resources over the period of my life, but I have only felt this at a macro or societal level, rather than personally. As Wolf (2013) is keen to point out, oppression is not experienced based solely on membership in one social group. Indeed, it is the combination of all of my identities; gender, class, race, age, and physical ability that have had an impact on my life at one time or another. But it is the

intersection of being female and working-class that I believe has been the source of my own oppression.

In the 1980s and 1990s sociological debates around 'difference' emphasised the collective experiences of the working-class, or women. But by the 1990s intersectionality had become a key concept in race, class, and gender studies, and has since been adopted as the preferred term to refer to and to analyse multiple axes of oppression (Lépinard, 2014).

The concept of intersectionality traces back to the seminal and influential work of the African American feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 1990s, in which she used the concept of intersectionality to denote the ways in which race and gender interacted to shape the multiple dimensions of black women's employment experiences (1989). In her work, she aimed to illustrate that the experiences that black women face could not be examined within the traditional boundaries of either race or gender discrimination, and instead could only be understood by looking at both gender and race dimensions simultaneously. She argued that belonging to multiple social groups means that all humans have the potential to be targeted by multiple forms of oppression simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality is now summarised by the following set of ideas: (1) the intersection of at least two axes of domination, such as race and gender, which constitutes a social category with a specific experience of social life; (2) a recognition that oppression is not experienced in a segmented way, because social relations are interlocked rather than simply added one on top of the other; (3) and the acknowledgement that experience of a complex form of oppression shapes a person's subjective experiences (Lépinard, 2014). Based on this argument, it would be almost impossible to separate gender and class; and oppression would happen as a result of being a 'working-class woman' rather than working-class or a woman. I am not attempting to deny the significance of gender, but am consciously choosing to prioritise class inequality as the focus of my study.

Returning to the current day, this idea is taken up by Wolf (2013) who argues that despite the success of gender equality over the past forty years, which has enabled a minority of women to reach the highest positions in society, there are still many

women, at the lower end of the class and pay spectrum, being ignored in society. She argues that these working-class women have still not realised the benefits of gender equality (Wolf, 2013).

Both gender and class have yielded different and often separate influences over the course of my life at different times. Realities do co-exist, overlap, and conflict but I relate to them differently. The ontological basis of each of these divisions is independent, and each prioritises different spheres of social relations at different times (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1983, 1992 cited in Yuval-Davis, 2006) which is why, for me, issues around gender have been completely subsumed by issues of class, despite living and working in highly gendered environments (masculine and feminine). So whilst I am not suggesting that I abandon completely any notions that there is intersectionality between gender, race and class at a macro level, it is the dimension of class and the lack of capital at a micro or individual level that has had most impact on my 'self'. And while I can't deny that focusing on class will almost inevitably obscure and oversimplify the discussion around gender inequality, I think that is important for me as a woman from the working-class who now has a voice to talk on behalf of that group of people from a class perspective.

## **Class and me**

If you have never lived your life in poverty, or been stigmatised because of the clothes you wear and the books you read; or lived in fear of being 'found out' as an imposter - you possibly have the privilege of being able to ignore class. But for me class is always there; it is all pervasive, and is what lies behind everything I do and everything I feel.

Even today, it seems that it is still unusual to speak about being working-class, particularly for women, because the negativity associated with the working-class is ubiquitous (McKenzie, 2015). However, it is a fact that even in 21st century Britain,

people's life chances are still strongly affected by the accident of their natal class and the inequalities that follow this (Sayer, 2005).

Despite upward class mobility I have made the decision throughout this thesis to define myself as working-class. I have used the term 'working-class' firstly as a term frequently recognised in popular and academic literature that denotes something outside (and below) the dominant middle-class culture, and secondly, because the designation of being 'working-class' reflects a personal state of mind; a way of being that has been defined and shaped by growing up in a family situation that lacked the necessary economic, cultural and social capital to begin life with a 'normal' level of opportunity (Reay, Crozier, and Clayton, 2009).

But by its very nature, defining myself as a working-class academic is paradoxical; my professional status, and all the trappings that entails, means I can no longer 'technically' be classified as working-class. I recognise that I now have less in common with people who are working-class, who have not been upwardly mobile, but my family background has had an enduring impact on my class identity. This influences my perception of self and identity, and how I see society, and the institution within which I work. The fact that I still use the term 'working-class academic' to describe myself acknowledges that, for me, being working-class, is more than a merely descriptive term; it is something that I have embodied. I have been told I am 'chippy', that I have a chip on my shoulder about being working-class. But I am proud to acknowledge my partisanship and it has proved to be a powerful source of strength and agency, driven by a sense of righteous indignation at the unfairness of working-class life.

As someone who grew up on a council estate (social housing) I still have a compassion and empathy for working-class people which has not been eroded as I have climbed the mobility ladder. I still have a very strong working-class awareness which focusses on challenging the division between the disadvantaged group and the privileged elite who hold political, cultural, and economic power. It is about identifying with a group of people who know what it is like to be poor, who know what it is like to struggle

against the odds in comparison to another group. The label poor, but more significantly illegitimate, became central to my own sense of self growing up.

Class is not just about the way you talk, or dress, or furnish your home; it is not just about the job you do or how much money you make doing it; nor is it merely about whether or not you went to university, nor which university you went to. Class is something beneath your clothes, under your skin, in your psyche, at the very core of your being. In the all-encompassing English class system, if you know that you are in the 'wrong' class, you know that therefore you are a valueless person (Kuhn, 1995, p.98)

To ignore or make class invisible, is to abdicate responsibility from the effects that it produces (Skeggs 1997). Furthermore, despite the capital I now have as an academic, I know that I will never have the certainty that I am 'doing it right' which is one of the main signifiers of middle-class disposition (Bourdieu, 1984). I still care about how I am seen in the eyes of the other. I feel I have to prove myself through every object, every interaction, and every appearance. I feel that I will never be free of the judgements of others that position me as the other. There is no denying that for me (and others) class is a powerful psychic force, the stuff of conflict, both internal and external that 'prompts feelings of shame as well as self-justification' (Sayer, 2005, p.306). As a person who works in higher education, I know I am the wrong class. This knowledge comes from small acts of symbolic violence that occur within my working day – this is explored in depth in chapter seven.

## **Teacher education and me**

Cochran-Smith *et al.* (2012) note that a teacher's individual life experiences profoundly shape how instruction is enacted in the classroom. My values and beliefs, and my pedagogical approaches in initial teacher education have been shaped by who I am and how I see the world. Because of the high status I afford it, I see education as a means of empowerment and agency. Thus, I think that 'becoming' a teacher should involve more than developing a set of skills or competencies, instead teachers need to develop the ability to make wise educational judgements (Biesta, 2012), and to do

this, teachers need to be critical of policy, practice and research. For this reason, I maintain that the disciplinary study of education is essential for developing practitioners, and teacher education should provide the environment in which the learning about teaching is fundamental to 'becoming' a teacher. The elevation of practice over theory in which teacher education is based on meeting a predefined list of competencies is inconsistent with my conception of teachers as intellectual professionals. And schools being solely responsible (almost) for training student teachers, an idea that once seemed radical, is now being made to appear a necessity. I now find myself in a strange position within the faculty in which my day- to-day activities are driven by an ideology that I can no longer agree with.

## **Chapter 4: The academic field**

I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing (hooks, 1994, p.59).

It was anticipated that my auto/biography would enable an exploration of the interplay of structure/agency, gender/class and the development of identity/self. In my efforts to make sense of my own everyday life experiences, like hooks, I have turned to theory to help me explain the 'hidden injuries' of class. (Sennett and Cobb, 1977)

Skeggs (1997) maintained that 'knowing is always mediated through the discourses available to us to interpret and understand our experiences' (1997, p.29). In this chapter I introduce you to the two main theoretical frameworks that have helped me interpret and understand mine. In this first section, I connect the work of Bourdieu and his sociological understanding of social reproduction with psychosocial analysis of the place of recognition in human interaction, drawing on the work of Axel Honneth (1995, 2007).

However, my study sits within an important body of theoretical work that draws on sociological research that examines the relationship between self and society; in particular, the experiences of women, who like me, came from working-class backgrounds and now work in academia. Alongside the two main sensitising frameworks, I share with you some of the work of working-class academics, mostly female, whose experiences have been similar to my own.

### **Introducing my theoretical friends**

No discussion of class and education can ignore the influence of Pierre Bourdieu. I turned to Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital, which lie at the core of



Bourdieu's theory, as a preliminary sensitising framework to analyse the structural forces that have impacted on my life. Using this framework in my analyses of my auto/biography, I was able to examine the most mundane details of everyday life through a lens which emphasises the relationship between the habitus, the field and the amount of capital.

However, describing the nature of 'being' of a working-class teacher educator was not as straightforward as I anticipated. My initial set of data suggested that I needed to be able to go beyond the exploration of my relationship with society, to explore the subjective experience of feeling working-class and illegitimacy. Axel Honneth's theory of recognition provided a conduit between structure and agency from a psychosocial perspective (Fleming and Gonzalez-Monteagudo, 2014). These two theoretical frameworks, although complementary, also offer a critique of each other, thus offering a broad psycho-social framework with which to analyse belonging and misrecognition.

## **Appropriating Bourdieu<sup>6</sup>**

At the time of his death in 2002, Bourdieu was perhaps the most prominent sociologist in the world. He had become a necessary reference point throughout the discipline in education, culture, and the sociology of knowledge (Weininger, 2002).

I was drawn to Bourdieu's work for two reasons; the first reason is the parallels with my own experience. I, like Bourdieu, am a miraculous exception: 'une miraculée'. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) offered this definition of un miraculé; 'the working-class child who succeeds against all the odds' (1990, p.175). Later, Bourdieu used the term 'oblat miraculé' to refer to a student 'who commits himself [sic] to scholarly

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6 The term used by Toril Moi (1991) to illustrate how she was using Bourdieu's social theory in relation to feminist theory.

success which gives him a ‘miraculous’ social mobility’ (2007, p.5). In a ‘Sketch for Self-Analysis’ Bourdieu (2007) decided to make himself the object of his research in a ‘self-socio-analysis with the hope that his readers through a glimpse of his own experiences will gain an understanding of ‘some means of doing what they do, and living what they live, a little bit better’ (2007, p.113). He wrote about his own experience of social mobility and the psychosocial pain that a shift in habitus, what he referred to as the cleft habitus can cause (Bourdieu, 2007). This text shows Bourdieu’s great humility as he shares with his readers the struggles of entering the intellectual field, including a passage about his own doctorate, and the real or perceived subjectification of symbolic violence. It is clear in his writing that he differentiates himself from the ostentation of the intellectual elite as he reflected on the academic field, preferring instead to ‘respect the “humble folk”’ (2007, p.86). Like Bourdieu, I am going to attempt to subject my own experience of class transition to critical examination.

Secondly, Bourdieu’s work is of particular interest to me because of the emphasis on the need for researchers to investigate their own social spaces in order to break with taken-for-granted practices (Bourdieu, 1988). So, like many researchers before me, I have used Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, field and capital which lie at the core of Bourdieu’s theory, as a preliminary sensitising framework to examine the interrelationship between factors that have influenced my subjective experience of class and education.

However, it is worth noting that alongside Bourdieu’s original concepts, I have drawn on some more contemporary representations of Bourdieu’s original work. Reay (2004; 2015) has enriched the notion of habitus to capture the link between the concept of habitus and the psychosocial (2015) to develop an understanding of the concept that ‘recognizes its permeability and its ability to capture continuity and change’ (2004, p.431). Moi (1991) and Chapman Houlton (2009) have both explored the notion of *un miraculé*. Friedman (2016) introduced me to the hysteresis effect and the divided habitus. I have drawn on the work of Ingram and Abrahams (2016) who have augmented Bourdieu’s idea of the ‘habitus clivé’, the cleft habitus or divided habitus by classifying habitus interruptions. And finally Field, Merrill and West

(2012) who expand the notion of capital to consider the kinds of psychosocial capital people may have or acquire.

## **Field and habitus - a methodological tool**

### **Field**

Bourdieu used the term field to foreclose an overly structuralist interpretation of social space (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). According to Bourdieu, a field 'is a space in which a game takes place, a field of objective relations between individuals or institutions who are competing for the same stake' (Bourdieu, 1984, cited in Moi, 1991, p.1021). This notion of the field and his focus on social spaces and personal relationships was central to Bourdieu's work. Bourdieu usually portrayed the struggles of the social field relating to both material goods, and the symbolic order in interest based terms (Bourdieu and Thompson, 1991). Thus in principle, a field is any social system, which can be shown to function according to such logic (Moi, 1991). Drawing on Bourdieu, Moi (1991) suggested that any agent in the field may be assumed to seek maximum power and dominance within it and dominance is achieved by amassing the maximum amount of the specific kind of symbolic capital current in the field.

According to Bourdieu, each field generates its own specific habitus; a position of dominance is achieved by amassing the maximum amount of the specific kind of symbolic capital current in the field (1993, p.34). 'For a field to work,' he writes, 'there must be stakes, and people ready to play the game, equipped with the habitus which enables them to know and recognize the imminent laws of the game, the stakes and so on' (Ibid.). As such, fields have their own specific mechanisms of selection or inclusion and this generates its own specific habitus, which Bourdieu defines as 'a system of dispositions adjusted to the game [of the field]' (Bourdieu, 1993, p.34). Habitus, then, may be seen as the totality of general dispositions acquired through practical experience in the field. The internalised set of tacit rules governing strategies and practices in the field, the habitus, means that the field is structured by a series of unspoken and unspeakable rules for what can legitimately be said or

perceived within the field (Moi, 1991). Generally speaking, all agents in the field to some extent share the same, even if not identical, habitus (Moi, 1991). In most fields it is the cultural capital and the habitus of the middle-class which is legitimised: their tastes, knowledge and dispositions are determined as inherently right (Lawler, 2000).

The intellectual field, Bourdieu (1986) argued, generates its own type of legitimacy with its own particular 'logic of practice' or 'game'. Entry into that field is dependent upon at least an implicit acceptance of the 'rules of the game'. However, Bourdieu (1990, p.66) explained that a 'feel for the game' emerges from experience of the game and the structures within which it is played. The 'rules' of the field are not explicit or codified (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) but are instead largely implicit and partially internalised, shaping individuals' thoughts and actions to profit from or succeed within the field according to the capitals valued by it. Furthermore, according to Bourdieu (1984), in this field the working-class are generally incapable of asserting themselves in such competitions because of a lack of capital.

Social hierarchies and social inequality produced in the field are created less by physical force and more by symbolic violence, such as being treated as inferior, invisible or being denied resources (Bourdieu, 1994). Bourdieu defined symbolic violence as 'soft' violence, or as 'censored and euphemized violence, which is to say that it is unrecognizable and unacknowledged' (1994, p.216-17). Symbolic violence flourishes most perniciously in late capitalist societies (Bourdieu, 1993), and particularly within 'the conventions and common places of academic or intellectual routine' (Bourdieu, 2007, p.89).

## **Habitus**

Bourdieu (1977) established an indirect causal link between positions in social space and practices by means of the concept of habitus (Weininger, 2002). The concept of 'habitus' has always been crucial in all of Bourdieu's thinking (Robbins, 1991). Bourdieu suggested that 'it is a very useful tool, indeed an indispensable instrument for social analysis (2002, p.49). More than any other concept in Bourdieu's work, has given rise to perpetual critique (Weininger, 2002). But this will not be discussed here

as it has been done elsewhere and is not the focus of this enquiry. It is a complex concept that takes many shapes and forms in Bourdieu's own writing, even more so in the wider sociological work of other academics (Reay, 2004). In his earlier works, Bourdieu (1990) seems to suggest a collective definition of habitus, but in one of his final papers, before he died, Bourdieu (2002) defined the habitus as:

...a system of dispositions, that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking, or a system of long-lasting (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action (2002, p.43, emphasis in the original)

Which according to Bourdieu, means that the habitus is differentially formed according to each actor's position in social space; as such, it is empirically variable and class-specific. As claimed by Bourdieu (1990), experience of the particular class condition that characterises a given location in social space imprints a particular set of dispositions upon the individual. These schemes enable actors to understand their specific situation. Class habitus (*habitus de classe*) (Bourdieu, 1984) is formed during childhood when children internalise the external; the parents' modes of thinking, feeling and behaving that are linked to their position in the social space, into their own habitus (Bourdieu, 1984). The secondary habitus is any system of transposable schemata and is built on the primary habitus and especially results from one's education at school and university, but also from other life experiences. (Bourdieu, 1984).

Bourdieu (1990) upheld that the habitus is embodied, it is not merely composed of attitudes and perceptions; it is expressed through ways of 'standing, speaking, walking and thereby of feeling and thinking' (1990, p.70). At times, Bourdieu also saw the habitus as potentially generating a wide repertoire of possible actions, simultaneously enabling the individual to draw on transformative and constraining courses of action (Reay, 2004).

[Habitus is] a kind of transforming machine that leads us to 'reproduce' the social conditions of our own production, but in a relatively unpredictable way, in such a way that one cannot move simply and mechanically from knowledge

of the conditions of production to knowledge of the products. (Bourdieu, 1990b, p.87).

Bourdieu (1984) pointed out that the operation of the habitus regularly excludes certain practices, particularly those that are unfamiliar to the cultural groupings to which the individual belongs

The habitus, as a system of dispositions to a certain practice, is an objective basis for regular modes of behaviour, and thus for the regularity of modes of practice, and if practices can be predicted, this is because the effect of the habitus is that agents who are equipped with it will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances (Bourdieu, 1990b, p.77)

But the habitus is also structuring: a person's habitus helps to shape their present and further practices. Habitus can be replicated through encountering a field that reproduces its dispositions or it can be transformed through a process that either raises or lowers an individual's expectations (Bourdieu, 1994). As such 'habitus is neither a result of free will, nor determined by structures, but created by a kind of interplay between the two over time' (Bourdieu, 1984, p.170).

Reay (2004) suggested that Bourdieu sees the habitus as a multilayered concept taking into account notions of the habitus at both societal and individual level in which a person's individual and collective history is constitutive of the habitus. As such, for Bourdieu, habitus is structured by one's past experiences, such as family upbringing and educational experiences, and present circumstances, but it is not 'rigid or frozen, unchanging or unchangeable' (Wacquant, 2014, p.7).

In drawing together these themes the habitus can be useful in understanding how class exists as an identity. However, I would like to suggest, that for me, my primary habitus is a complex internalised core: my 'substantial self' (Nias, 1989), which makes opportunities in life possible, acceptable, improbable and sometimes inconceivable. But as Sayer (2005) argued, while we may develop habitus through socialisation, we are also reflexive beings who interpret our situations and consider various ways to respond to them - we are not robots mindlessly playing out our ascribed roles of race, class, gender, and other identities. It is only through acknowledgment of these

interpretations and considerations that we can understand how resistance to our ascribed roles is possible (Sayer, 2005).

Because the habitus is such a large part of this thesis, I would like to turn briefly to what Bourdieu would define as a working-class habitus. Bourdieu (1984), based on his extensive research, demonstrated that among the members of the dominant class, a unitary lifestyle emerges around what he called 'the sense of distinction' (1984, p. 260). The middle-class habitus is defined, above all, by its overriding aesthetic sensibility; with the working-class who have the 'taste for necessity' possessing a habitus that is 'antithetical' to that of the dominant class (Ibid.) Bourdieu (1984) draws distinctions between the popular outspokenness of the working-class and the highly censored language of the bourgeois.... the agitation and haste, grimaces and gesticulation are opposed...to the restraint and impassivity which signifies higher status (Bourdieu, 1984).

Before moving on to some of the more contemporary interpretations of Bourdieu's theory, it needs to be acknowledged that all of Bourdieu's concepts have become the object of extensive (if not endless) meta-theoretical debate. There is not the space to explore these here, so for the purposes of this thesis, these debates have been left to the side.

## **Habitus clivé**

While most criticisms of the habitus cite structuralism or determinism (Jenkins, 2008) in some of Bourdieu's more recent work there was more emphasis on the misalignment and tension between the habitus and the field. Bourdieu, drawing conclusions from his interviews of the poor in 'Weight of the World' Bourdieu, (1999) found that the movement of habitus across a new, unfamiliar field resulted in

A habitus divided against itself, in constant negotiation with itself and its ambivalences and therefore doomed to a kind of duplication to a double perception of the self, to successive allegiances and multiple identities (Bourdieu, 1999, p.511)

Bourdieu rarely explicitly engaged with mobility in his empirical work and the concept of habitus clivé (cleft habitus) remains a concept only fleetingly explored in his empirical work (Friedman, 2016; Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). But implicit in the concept of habitus is that it operates at an unconscious level unless individuals confront events that cause self-questioning, whereupon habitus begins to operate at the level of consciousness and the person develops new facets of the self. Such disjuncture between habitus and field occur when individuals with a well-developed habitus find themselves in different fields (Reay, 2004). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) maintained that during moments of profound change, when there is a mismatch between one's (primary) habitus and the habitus required in a new field, a hysteresis effect takes hold.

Bourdieu (1998) began to explore how hysteresis is experienced at a personal level, particularly among the socially mobile. He found that these class 'transfuges' were caught in a 'painful' position of social limbo, of 'double isolation', from both their origin and destination class. While they certainly attempted to adopt the cultural dispositions valued in their new elite milieu, they were never able to 'erase their nostalgia for reintegration into their community of origin' (1998, p. 107). Indeed, he noted that the hysteresis experienced by the extreme upwardly mobile (like himself) often had psychological implications (Bourdieu, 2007). Bourdieu (1999) draws on the psychoanalytic notion of 'splitting of the self' Bourdieu to claim that such a dislocation of the habitus and field could produce a painfully fragmented self, a habitus clivé'

The product of such a contradictory injunction is doomed to be ambivalent about himself...to produce a habitus divided against itself, and doomed to a kind of double perception of self, to successive allegiances and multiple identities (Bourdieu, 1999: 511).

Following Bourdieu, Friedman (2016) examined the psychological pain social mobility has on individuals, in particular the psychological hurt of being held back from middle-class acceptance and of being torn between two competing worlds. Friedman (Ibid.) concluded from his study, that a person's ability to adapt to the new habitus was heavily dependent on their mobility trajectory; not just the range of upward mobility but also by the speed and direction of movement. Individuals



covering short distances, and moving slowly upwards towards economic security, were likely to make a smooth transition - emotionally and psychologically. However, long-range, upwardly mobile respondents, the group most celebrated in prevailing political rhetoric of meritocracy, battled with feelings of insecurity, guilt, estrangement and abandonment, but many were also endowed with a unique capacity for reflexivity and self-analysis; what Field, Merrill and West (2012) would call psychological capital. Driven by a need to try to understand the experiences of the socially mobile working-class, Ingram and Abrahams (2016) have extended Bourdieu's concept of habitus *clivé* to offer a typology that allows for a complex understanding of the shifts in habitus and field. As a result, they have developed a typology which illustrates the complexity of the cleft habitus.

The table on the next page shows Ingram and Abrahams' (2016) succinct model for analysing the interaction between habitus, the originary field and a secondary field if they are not wholly aligned. Acknowledging that a person's primary habitus is formed through socialisation within the family and early life, Ingram and Abrahams (Ibid.) argue that the typology can explain a person's position when they experience a new and secondary social field. It is divided into four quadrants, each pertaining to a relationship between the habitus and the two fields.

The left hand side represents a position in which the individual identifies with only one field and rejects the other. In the abandoned habitus response in the left hand column, the originary habitus is abandoned as the old structures are overwritten, or substituted as the structures of the new field become internally dominant. The reconfirmed habitus describes a situation in which the person will experience difficulties in accommodating both sets of incongruent structure. In this situation the new structures do not become part of the internalised dispositions of the habits and the new field is rejected as the original habitus is re-confirmed.

In the right hand column, the two possibilities are based on the combination of the schemes of perception from both fields. The reconciled habitus occurs when the two fields although incongruent are integrated and the person can successfully operate within both fields. This reconciled habitus is a more positive framing of habitus

interruption and accords with the concept of the third space where something new is generated from the process of internalising distinctive structures (Bhabha, 1994). Finally, a destabilised habitus is when the structuring forces are incorporated into the habitus but cannot be reconciled; instead two separate schemes vie for dominance and the person alternates between two sets of dispositions and experience internal conflict and division.

<b>Disjunctive: Originary field OR secondary field</b>	<b>Conjunctive: Originary field AND secondary field</b>
<b><u>Abandoned habitus</u></b> – divided from the originary field. A person renegotiates their habitus in response to the structuring forces of this new field.	<b><u>Reconciled habitus</u></b> – two fields are reconciled. A person can successfully navigate both fields. Can accommodate both structures despite opposition. Can induce a degree of reflexivity.
<b><u>Re-confirmed habitus</u></b> – divided from the new field. The new field is rejected and its structures are not internalised.	<b><u>Destabilized habitus</u></b> – person tries to incorporate the structuring forces of each field into their habitus but cannot achieve successful assimilation. Instead they oscillate between two dispositions and internalise conflict and division.

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**Habitus Interruptions typology (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016, p.148)**

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Ingram and Abrahams (2016) typology of habitus interruptions illustrates how plural dispositions can operate as part of the habitus and argue that their concept is an optimistic contrast to Bourdieu's more negative or deterministic notion of the divided habitus; it suggests that although painful for some, a divided habitus can also be a positive and empowering resource. This habitus interruptions typology has provided a useful model to think about how I have reconciled, or not, the impact of class transition on my habitus.

## Capital

When we are born, we inherit a social space, from which comes access to different amounts of capital (Skeggs, 1997). So an individual's habitus will depend, at least partly on the amount of capital they possess.

The term 'capital' is usually associated with a narrowly defined economic category of monetary exchange for profit. Bourdieu (1986) maintained that the examination of economic capital protects, insulates and depoliticises the social and cultural practices and institutions of the bourgeoisie by locating them outside the organising logic of a society, as if they were incidental to, rather than complicit in, the structured hierarchy of that society. So in various texts, Bourdieu offers a broader use of the term which extends the term 'capital' by employing a wider system of exchanges, in which assets of different kinds are transformed and exchanged within complex networks and within and across different fields (Moore, 2008). Bourdieu (1986) contended that capital is accumulated labour which, when appropriated by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate more capital; it is, argued Bourdieu, the principle underlying inequality (1986). Bourdieu offers four different types of capital; 1) Economic capital is wealth either inherited or generated from interactions between the individual and the economy; 2) Cultural capital, probably Bourdieu's (1986) best known concept, can he argues exist in three forms: in an embodied state, in the form of long lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods; and in the institutionalised state, resulting in such things as educational qualifications. Cultural capital is primarily transmitted through the family. It is from the family that children derive modes of thinking, types of dispositions, sets of meaning and qualities of style; 3) Social capital is generated through social processes between the family and wider society and is made up of social networks. The nature of the social group is shaped by the material, cultural and symbolic capital of the members of the group; and, 4) Symbolic capital is the form the different types of capital take once they are perceived and recognised as legitimate.

Bourdieu (1986) suggested that cultural capital can be acquired to a varying extent, depending on the period, the society, and the social class, however it always remains

marked by its earliest conditions of acquisition and it cannot be accumulated beyond the appropriating capacities of an individual agent. Some forms of cultural capital are valued more highly than others and these become legitimised; in western society it is the cultural capital of the middle-class which is given value (Skeggs, 1997b). As some practices, resources, and people are legitimised, others are considered illegitimate. For example, with reference to education, the educational qualification, invested with the specific force of the official, becomes the condition for legitimate access to a growing number of positions, particularly the dominant ones (Ibid.). As such the educational system has the power to dispossess the working-class.

However, as Chapman Hault (2009) observed, Bourdieu fails to engage adequately with how some students, with apparently limited educational and social capital, can survive and prosper even in a culturally exclusive habitus. This idea is developed by Field, Merrill and West (2012) who expand the notion of capital to consider the kinds of psychosocial capital people may have or acquire. They suggest that their familial capital is different from other forms of social capital because family ties are not always aligned simplistically to other aspects of social capital. Indeed, Lawler (2000) found that for upwardly mobile daughters, their desire to do it differently in their own mothering was often 'shaped by a class-based construction of 'good mothering' (Lawler, 2000, p.102). She found that for many upwardly mobile women their mothers represented a place that they had left behind, and to which they fear returning (Lawler, 2000).

Field, Merrill and West (2012) were also interested in the idea of psychological capital, which they suggest are the qualities that may be formed as an individual encounters and deals with life crises which may result in the individual developing new capabilities such as resilience, flexibility, or determination. The reader will see evidence of both a strong yet fragile psychological capital in my own story which is both paradoxical and ambiguous.

Quinn (2010) subverts the notion of social capital by introducing the concept of imagined social capital, which she argues 'is the benefit that is created by participating in imagined or symbolic social networks. I would like to suggest that the authors that

I relate to in the final section of this chapter entitled 'Finding solidarity' is representative of an imagined social network. I didn't know any of these really strong women personally, but I felt a sense of belonging when I read their stories.

Furthermore, Bourdieu (1986) maintained that the different types of capital can be converted and the convertibility of the different types of capital is the basis of the strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital, and the position occupied in social space. Bourdieu (1996) was anxious to expose that the distribution of cultural, social and symbolic capital is as important a determinant of social, economic and cultural well-being and power, as is the distribution of economic capital; its acquisition is far from a neutral, disinterested enterprise, but one which legitimates the enormous power, superior social positions and material wealth of the dominant class.

### **Capital that counts**

Bourdieu (1984) claimed that certain kinds of culture have the prospect of generating social advantage, and hence forms of capital that are considered legitimate culture are consecrated in public forums like the educational system. This, he argued, went hand in hand with entitlement and authority (1984).

Bourdieu (1986) contended that the intellectual field generates its own type of legitimacy with their own particular 'logic of practice' or 'game'. Entry into that field is dependent upon at least an implicit acceptance of the 'rules of the game'. The right to speak, legitimacy, is invested in those agents recognised by the field as possessors of the 'right' type of capital and as such these individuals become spokespersons for the dominant ideology who silence challengers to their position by removing their right to speak. The possessors of symbolic capital become the wielders of symbolic power, and thus of symbolic violence (Moi, 1991).

As Moi (1991) suggested, Bourdieu's uniqueness was the 'development of what one might call a micro theory of social power' (1991, p. 1019). So using Bourdieu's

concepts of habitus, field and capital, I have been able to incorporate the most mundane details of everyday life in the presentation of my auto/biography and to use this to analyse feelings of illegitimacy. Using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus field and capital as a method for simultaneously analysing 'the experience of social agents and ..... the objective structures which make this experience possible' (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 782) provided a means of viewing the structure and agency as occurring intersubjectively.

Because of the nature of my research I could not ignore the pervasive influence of Bourdieu. And while Bourdieu helped me to analyse the structural and objective aspects of growing up in economic, cultural and social disadvantage, the formation of the substantial self, and the impact that this has had, his concepts of habitus, field and capital did not sufficiently address the subjective experience of people like me, who achieve, despite the odds, in the education system – les miraculés (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

## **Recognising Honneth**

As stated earlier the distinctiveness of this research rests not only on the fact, that I, as someone from disadvantaged beginnings, wanted to confront why I am struggling with my identity as a middle-class academic. I also wanted to try to explore how and why I overcame disadvantage, and how this has shaped my beliefs and values.

However, describing the nature of 'being' a working-class teacher educator was not as straightforward as I anticipated. In the early stages of my auto/biographical data I found that I needed to be able to go beyond the exploration of my relationship with society, to illustrate the interconnections between my identity and its historical, psychological, social and political formation. So, I was left looking for a theoretical framework that could help me explain this phenomenon.

I came to the conclusion that the emphasis on personal resilience, and the importance of identity, required a different conceptual framework. Again, I turned to theoretical friends for some guidance. Both Sayer (2005) and West, Fleming and Finnegan (2013), suggested Honneth's theory of recognition as a bridge between structure and agency from a psychosocial perspective (Fleming and Gonzalez-Monteagudo, 2014).

Like Bourdieu, Honneth (1995, 2007) criticised theories of class struggle which assume an objective standard of morality based purely on economic difference. He argued that underneath the façade of integration of minorities into contemporary capitalist society, there still remains structures of power that oppress claims to justice not recognised by the dominant social groups (1995). Furthermore, like Bourdieu, Honneth (2007) looked to the experiences of injustice that cannot be articulated in a 'rational' and coherent manner, arguing that social critical theory should examine the necessary social preconditions for individual self-fulfillment in society as a whole, rather than merely in the actions of the state (Honneth, 1995). Honneth (1995) advanced that negative emotional reactions generated by key forms of disrespect are not always purely based on 'the idiosyncratic misfortune of individuals' (Honneth, 1995; xix) but instead reveal the structures of class oppression in society (2007).

Honneth's theory of recognition connects 'a theory of psychic development with a theory of social change in order to develop an account that is empirically grounded in real experiences and normatively robust enough to critically evaluate contemporary social relations' (Zurn, 2005, p.92). It offers a 'link between the social causes of widespread feelings of injustice and the normative objectives of emancipatory movements' (Honneth in Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p.113) and it attempts to make social issues such as poverty, social injustice, and abuses of power open to being understood in recognition terms. Honneth (2007) maintained that people experience injustice not through violations of the abstract rules of language, but in having fundamental aspects of their identity formation challenged.

Honneth's (1995) theory starts from the Hegelian idea that identity is constructed intersubjectively, through a process of mutual recognition. He contended that citizens morally require recognition from others and people have to be recognised, in various

ways, in order that their identities be fulfilled. As such, recognition is simultaneously an individual and social need.

the reproduction of social life is governed by the imperative of mutual recognition, because one can develop a practical relation-to-self only when one has learned to view oneself, from the normative perspective of one's partners in interaction, as their social addressee (Honneth 1995, p.92).

Like Hegel and Mead, Honneth stressed the importance of social relationships to the development and maintenance of a person's identity (Anderson, 1995 in Honneth, 1995). Honneth takes from Hegel 'the idea that full human flourishing is dependent on the existence of well-established ethical relations – in particular love, law and ethical life (Anderson, in Honneth 1995; xi). Honneth (1995) suggested that through three different types of social interaction: loving concern, mutual respect and societal solidarity (2007), individuals develop three differentiated forms of relation-to-self: self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem, respectively.

The first, and most basic form of relation to self, self-confidence, gained in primary affective relations of love and friendship is based on the right to exist. To explain the link between self-confidence and intersubjective relations, Honneth (1995) drew on the object relations theory of early childhood experience developed by Winnicott (1965). Object relations theorists argue that the development of children cannot be abstracted from the interactive relationships in which the process of maturation takes place. Using the concept of good-enough mothering, Winnicott (1965) explored how the mother brings the child from absolute dependence to the formation of a coherent ego with a secure sense of self and other. Winnicott (1965) explains how the early relationships between mother and child provide templates in which the infant can develop a sense of self and argued that good enough early relationships, in which the child feels sufficiently loved and secure, provide a sense of the world as fundamentally satisfying, where desire can be expressed and fulfilled. However, he maintained that the development of a strong psyche cannot occur by 'mothering' alone – it must ultimately be an expression of the mother's love (1965). If the mother fails at developing this early relationship, the child will not develop the 'real self', but will instead construct for itself a compliant 'false self' – leading to a need to appease or



please for fear of not being good enough or acceptable in the eyes of the other (Winnicott, 1965).

Drawing on Winnicott's object relations theory, Honneth (1995) claimed that love

.... prepares the ground for a type of relation-to self in which subjects mutually acquire basic confidence in themselves. It is both conceptually and genetically prior to every other form of reciprocal recognition. This fundamental level of emotional confidence – not only in the experience of needs and feelings but also in their expression – which the intersubjective experience of love helps to bring about constitutes the psychological precondition for the development of all further attitudes of self-respect (1995, p.107).

This conceives of our physical needs and desires as a valued part of our own person, through the care of love in the context of close relationships which develop. As the child experiences love from the mother, they become aware that they too are deserving of love. If an individual experiences love, an ability to love one's self and others is developed. In this, a positive image of one's abilities, self-confidence is developed and the individual is then capable of forging an identity by receiving recognition from others. This is the process by which individuals see themselves as distinct from others. Without a special relationship with another person it is not possible to become aware of one's own uniqueness and special characteristics (Honneth, 1995).

The next form of positive self-relation, self-respect, derives from our awareness of being a morally accountable subject through the moral respect and recognition of the other as a moral agent, in the context of civil society (Honneth, 1995). This involves the mode of cognitive respect that occurs when moral and legal rights are bestowed on the individual; the individual becomes aware that others have sufficient respect for them to recognise their right to have their own autonomy and agency. This second basic form of recognition, argued Honneth (1995), is based on legally institutionalised relations of universal respect that are achieved through one's formal capacity for autonomous moral action. Through the universal rights accorded to all members of a society, individuals are able to achieve self-respect for themselves as equals of other

members, which means they are entitled to make their own decisions about how to conceive and realise their own life plans (Honneth, 1995).

The final level of relation to self relates to self-esteem or self-worth. This, claimed Honneth (1995), is dependent on an awareness of having capabilities that are good or valuable to a concrete community. In this context one is able to achieve self-esteem by being recognised as a distinct individual with particular traits and abilities that contribute positively to the shared projects of that community (Ibid). Receiving recognition at this level occurs when individual abilities and traits are recognised as being of genuine use in maintaining and developing the structures within an appropriate community. These can then become honoured and celebrated, which in turn leads to loyalty and solidarity. This final form of recognition is founded on networks of solidarity and shared values within which the worth of individual members of a community can be acknowledged (Ibid.)

I would like to posit that this feeling of solidarity is a feeling akin to a sense of belonging. It is a space in which one is seen as valid member of a community, when there are social connections: it goes beyond feeling a sense of belonging to one in which an individual is considered as 'one of us'. This notion of belonging is as it is as Hagerty *et al*, (1992) argue about 'connecting one's self into the fabric of surrounding people, places and things' (1992, p.173) so that they feel that they are integral to that system in which they are valued, but also in which the person experiences a fit or congruence with the other people, groups and environment through shared or complementary characteristics.

In this way belonging occurs when there is a sense of involvement in a social system, so that people within the system feel an integral part of that system (Ibid.). In this sense belonging does not fix the subject, but is an endless process of seeking and gaining recognition. It is not just about social locations and constructions of individual and collective identities and attachments but also about the ways these are valued and judged (Honneth, 1995) and recognition occurs when individual abilities and traits are recognised as being of genuine use in maintaining and developing the structures within an appropriate community.

Honneth (2007) later claimed that when individuals encounter each other in society they have the expectation that they will reciprocally recognise each other's fundamental needs. Indeed, according to Honneth (2007), this is the reason that people enter into communicative relationships.

...the normative presupposition of all communicative action is to be seen in the acquisition of social recognition: subjects encounter each other within the parameters of the reciprocal expectation that they be given recognition as moral persons and for their social achievements (2007, p.71)

Honneth's (1995) theory of recognition thus assumes that in order to develop their identity, people depend on the feedback of other subjects, and of society as a whole. Honneth's (1995, 2007) theory fully acknowledges the embodied, affective and normative nature of social practice. According to Honneth, the concept of recognition is more than being recognised as legitimate, it is about feeling understood and feeling valued; in that way recognition is visceral. In this sense who we are depends on our relationships and sense of togetherness.

Honneth's conception of recognition has been criticised, most notably by Nancy Fraser (2003, in Fraser and Honneth, 2003) for ignoring consequences of inequalities in income and wealth. Fraser contends that although these two types of deprivation, recognition and distribution of economic wealth, are often interwoven, they should be theoretically separated (2003). However, Honneth (2003, in Fraser and Honneth 2003) contends that even questions of distributional justice can be better understood in terms of normative categories that come from a sufficiently differentiated theory of recognition (Ibid.). He favoured a 'moral theoretical monism' (Ibid., p. 157) in which 'recognition' acknowledges both the cultural and the material, asserting that they should be examined together. As such, Honneth maintained that the conceptual framework of recognition is an appropriate tool for 'categorically unlocking social experiences of injustice as a whole' (Honneth, in Fraser and Honneth, 2003, p.133). Fleming (2016) neatly summarises Honneth's theory of recognition stating that individuals need caring and loving individuals in their life, who can recognise the reciprocal nature of legal rights and the contributions of others.

The desire to belong is at the heart of human nature. When we belong we take it for granted, when we are excluded we can become vulnerable to fear and negativity (O'Donohue, 2000). A sense of belonging can liberate and empower – in this way belonging could be considered a necessity. However, it was the feeling of illegitimacy that prompted the auto/biographical turn of this research so I now I am going to explore what it is to 'not' belong.

Honneth's (1995) general term for the failure to give someone recognition is 'mißachtung', meaning disrespect, which refers to humiliation, degradation, insult, and disenfranchisement. English translations of Honneth's work tend to use 'disrespect' to refer both to misrecognition, the absence or denial of rights generally, and to the existential notions of lack of love, esteem, and respect (Zurn, 2005). In this thesis I have used misrecognition to refer to the kind of systematic denigration which makes self-esteem difficult to maintain. In this way, misrecognition arises not merely from cultural and symbolic slights, but also from those anchored in social structures that systematically deny the members of denigrated groups equal opportunities for participation in social life. Honneth (1995) also offers three corresponding forms of disruptions to the three patterns of recognition to give three forms of related moral injury.

At the most fundamental level, disrespect is when one's body is violated by physical injury which leads to a loss of trust in oneself and the world and does lasting damage to one's basic confidence. The second form of disrespect, or 'misrecognition', to which an individual is subjected, is by being structurally excluded from the possession of certain rights within society gained from seeing or feeling others failure to recognise the value of one's judgments, which in turn leads to 'the feeling of not enjoying the status of a full-fledged partner to interaction equally endowed with moral rights' (Honneth, 1995, p.133). This type of disrespect typically brings with it a loss of self-respect. The third type of disrespect/misrecognition leads to the erosion of one's self esteem through the denigration and degradation of one's way of life. This form of disrespect can 'rob[s] the subjects in question of every opportunity to attribute social value to their own abilities' (Honneth, 1995, p.134), especially when it is made known that one's capabilities are not valuable. This has the potential to destroy one's sense of

self-significance which typically brings with it a loss of self-esteem (Honneth, 1995). Thus, Honneth (2007) argued that the examination of class structures in society needs to be based on an examination of individual moral experiences in everyday life, rather than on universal claims of injustice.

To summarise, Honneth argued that misrecognition, is accomplished through two means: 1) cultural and symbolic exclusion, and 2) institutional individualisation in which processes are intended to hinder or prevent individuals, and groups, from sharing their experiences of injustice (Honneth, 2007). Honneth's (2007) definition suggests that those misrecognised, are denied the principles of equal moral worth and are thus prevented from participating as full partners in social interaction. This definition conveys a meaning close to the Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, discussed earlier. Yet, misrecognition was also a term used frequently by Bourdieu over the years; and whilst Bourdieu's definition of misrecognition overlaps with Honneth's theory, the concepts are crucially different.

Bourdieu's concept of misrecognition arises from his central concern with social practices in social spaces, or fields. In Bourdieu's view, social fields produce knowledge; and knowledge is a form of capital associated with prestige or power, and is closely connected to the habitus. Bourdieu (2000) argues that misrecognition is the way in which wider society offers demeaning, confining or inaccurate readings of the value of particular groups or individuals based on their habitus. His definition of misrecognition makes reference to how every day and dynamic social processes, (a situation, process, or action), are not recognised for what they are because they were not previously experienced within the range of dispositions and propensities of the habitus of the person(s) confronting them. In other words,

These common dispositions, and the shared doxa they [the dominant] establish, are the product of an identical or similar socialization leading to the generalized incorporation of the structures of the market of symbolic goods in the form of cognitive structures in agreement with the objective structures of that market. Symbolic violence rests on the adjustment between the structures constitutive of the habitus of the dominated and the structure of the relation of domination to which they apply: the dominated perceive the

dominant through the categories that the relation of domination has produced and which are thus identical to the interests of the dominant (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 121)

Thus, misrecognition according to Bourdieu (2000, cited in Lovell, 2007) occurs when symbolic capital has been acquired by a successful act of legitimation by the dominant class so that misrecognition of the dominated by the dominant takes the form of a refusal, often legitimated, to grant any but inferior standing to the dominated and this constitutes symbolic violence (Lovell, 2007). For Bourdieu, misrecognition is pervasive and complex.

In confronting myself, through an analysis of my class transition through a critical lens, using Bourdieu and Honneth as sensitising frameworks, I aim to illustrate how 'formal' education has enabled me to cross class boundaries and to confront how my class origins and family status have had an enduring impact on my epistemological beliefs. Furthermore, I hope to expose the lived experience of being an educated working-class woman in a middle-class field.

Bourdieu and Honneth, as sensitising frameworks, in combination offer a critical framework for interpreting my dynamic and intersubjective experience of education, class and identity and for exposing the moral significance of class (Sayer, 2005). Bourdieu's theory points to the pervasiveness of evaluative patterns and distinctions in modern society that determine social status and class (Bourdieu 1984). Whereas, Honneth's theory (1995) focuses on the way in which people's self-respect and self-identity depend on the recognition of others and so are vulnerable to being misrecognised or ignored both by social institutions and in interpersonal interactions. I have used both theoretical frameworks to illuminate the psychological consequences of social and political injustice on people from the working-class. As such, it is anticipated that this thesis, as part of my own struggle for recognition, will aim to change institutionalised patterns of cultural value that subordinate certain people and groups in such a way that they are denied the opportunity to participate in social life on an equal basis (Zurn, 2005).

## **Finding solidarity**

My study sits within an important body of theoretical work that draws on sociological research that examines the relationship between self and society; in particular, the experiences of women like me, who come from working-class backgrounds and who now work in academia. Alongside the two main sensitising frameworks introduced above, I have found comfort in the work of working-class academics, mostly female, with whom I identify as having shared experiences; their contributions are interwoven throughout the whole of this thesis. At a time when I was feeling illegitimate and marginalised in the university setting, these women became my imagined social network, bringing with it social and cultural capital. I am proud to be a part of this community and have found both comfort and agency in their work. Furthermore, it provided me with a group of friends to talk with. As you will see, these texts have also enabled me to write, and indeed, to think about my experiences for the very first time.

These women: Beverley Skeggs; Pat Mahony; Christine Zmroczek; Valerie Walkerdine; Helen Lucey; Carolyn Steedman; Anne Oakley; Diane Reay; Steph Lawler; Liz Stanley; Sue Wise; Louise Morley; Gillian Plummer; Lisa Mckenzie and Lynsey Hanley writing mostly in the zeitgeist of the women's movement in the 1990s, but some more recently, have shared, through their own autobiographies, the feeling of being oppressed because of both their gender and their class. The autobiographies of other working-class academics contained in the edited collections; Dews and Law (1995); Ryan and Sackrey (1984); Morley and Walsh (1995); Mahony and Zmroczek (1997); Van Galen and Dempsey (2009); and Mitchell, Wilson and Archer (2015), have also provided comfort. These academics, all of whom offer a unique, empathic appreciation of the phenomenon of 'being educated working-class', have offered perspectives which are both similar and different to my own. They have enabled me to see my own experiences from the outside, to better understand the subjective experience of an educated working-class woman. As I have read their stories, I have developed a more positive relation to self insofar that I now recognise that I am not alone, that I am actually part of a community, one in which I can contribute through my own theorising.

These educated working-class women, who have embodied being a feminist working-class intellectual have proved to be good collaborators in my doctoral journey; affirming, provoking and critiquing my own thoughts and feelings. Writing honestly and openly about the ways in which social forces have shaped their lives, including the ambiguities and intense contradictions of class transition in their own research, has raised my awareness of the power of the structural forces of class (and gender, and race/ethnicity). They have all openly shared their feelings of ambivalence and displacement, of being torn between previous and current class locations that frame their experiences. In nearly all of the stories, feelings of estrangement and disillusionment are expressed. Like me, many of the contributors to the anthologies have written about retaining their working-class identities, about which many speak with pride and/or pain.

The remaining part of this chapter brings together a summary of working-class women's stories to help challenge the gendered and classed construction of the academy. Some, like me, have experienced the oppressive patterns of symbolic power, and like me have used their narratives 'to fuel their political energies and purposes' (Morley and Walsh, 1995).

When I started thinking about applying to be a doctoral student, as someone who was struggling to understand the clash between the political agenda; social context and my own beliefs and values, the first text I turned to was the anthology 'Feminist Academics: Creative Agents for Change' (Morley and Walsh, 1995). I wanted to know how I could reconcile these tensions and develop the confidence to teach more creatively. At the time I felt so isolated, I needed to find someone, anyone, who I could identify with. It was Jo Stanley's chapter that resonated deeply with me – she was recounting a story in which, because of her own anxieties about 'being an academic', she called a conference workshop 'Feeling like a working-class thicko at academic conferences'. In this chapter, Stanley (1995) wrote about experiencing feelings of frustration and anger at the continued existence of class inequality in the academy. For the first time I immediately recognised the debilitating difficulties that I face on a day-to-day basis: internalised feelings of lack of self-worth, distressing but seemingly necessary alienation from home, and feelings of loneliness and frustration. She also



suggested that these experiences can resurrect early childhood experiences of exclusion and humiliation, which has certainly been the case for me.

A second text 'This Fine Place So Far from Home: Voices of Academics from The Working-class' (Dews and Law, 1995), although written by academics from the U.S.A. and with contributions from men and women, further helped me begin to understand feelings of marginalisation and disempowerment. Like me, many of these contributors see themselves as 'interlopers, others as traitors, or miscast members in someone else's play' (Ryan and Sackrey, 1984, p.11). I have called it illegitimacy. Lang (1995) wrote about seeking entrance to a complex academic culture. Like Lang, I attempted to discard my working-class traits in favour of a new set as I tried to fit in. However, it was Christine Overall's (1995) contribution that helped me to reconcile the competing loyalties of an upwardly mobile person. Like me, she has used education as protection from a working-class life, and like me she still claims to identify with working-class-culture. She argued that the price to be paid for breaking away 'is to be intellectually and socially 'nowhere at home' ' (Overall, 1995, p.219).

But it was Carolyn Steedman's (1986) book 'Landscape for a Good Woman' in which she writes about the complex relationship with her mother, that enabled me to see the enduring impact of the habitus. I read and responded to it, firstly as the child of a mother; and, secondly as a product of a similar history. My mum was born the same year as Carolyn Steedman. As will be seen later in this thesis, like Steedman it was my mum's complex and difficult relationship with her mother that shaped her sense of herself and her place in the world, and it is my own complex parallel relationship with my mum that has shaped my sense of self and place in the world. My brother and I, like Steedman and her sister, 'were born, and had no choice in the matter; but we were burdens, expensive and never grateful enough. There was nothing we could do to pay back the debt of our existence' (Steedman, 1986, p.17). We knew that our mum was a good mother; she'd told us so. My mum repeatedly told me of her sacrifices: we had never gone hungry; we had warm beds to lie in at night, and importantly for my mum, and luckily for us, she encouraged us to be educated. Whilst this had an impact on both my brother and me, I think I felt the brunt of this, being the oldest, and because of the closer social, psychic or emotional attachment that daughters and mothers have

(Lawler, 2000). Lawler (2000) drawing on the work of Bourdieu and Winnicott (discussed earlier in this chapter) has enabled me to examine the crucial relationship between my mum and me in order to shed some light on the significance of the maternal figure on my sense of self - even in her absence.

A further source of encouragement came from Chapman Hoult who shares her story of resilience in her PhD thesis. This thesis gave me the courage to 'come[ing] out from the disguise of academic language and theoretical references in order to be honest' (Chapman Hoult, 2009a, p.18) about life experiences. Like me, although she is talking specifically about the PhD, she talks about feelings of vulnerability, of being a learner and the need for affirmation during the learning process – a constant refrain in my own sense of self and identity. Just as I started to have doubts about writing auto/biographically I found comfort in the work of Liz Stanley (1995a) who wrote about 'going native' (1995a, p.183) which she said was crossing the divide between scientists and people; detachment and involvement; objectivity and subjectivity; and rationality and emotion. She enabled me to see that as a working-class woman, I am, and it is suitable to be, a 'native, who is 'there' and emotionally involved, rather than the 'us', the rulers who are 'here and rationally detached' (Stanley, 1995a, p.183); this is an ontological state. In this way, Stanley gave me the courage to write as an educated working-class woman through auto/biography (Stanley, 1995).

Some of these autobiographies suggest that gender and class are not separate phenomena, and cannot be separated. But I shall argue that while they are lived and experienced jointly, classed and gendered experiences and behaviour are responses to different sources of inequality. It is the experience of being a working-class academic that I want to focus on in my story, because it is class oppression that I have found most pervasive, unavoidable and difficult to challenge; it is only there for those who experience it. So it seems legitimate for me to abstract the key object of interest, class, from the mass of other phenomena in which it is embedded, e.g. gender and race, as long as 'one remembers that to understand such cases we need to recombine our object of interest with the other processes from which it has temporarily been abstracted' (Sayer, 2005, p.17).

So now you have met the academics with whom I have walked the road of my PhD, some have been there all the way, guiding me along the right path, and others have travelled part of the journey. But, there have also been many others along the path, whom I have met and had conversations, debate and arguments with. You will see mention of these as they appear alongside, even if just for a short while, but none have been less than thought-provoking.

With the help of all my academic friends, I have been able to 'engage in a simulated conversation' (Brookfield, 1995, p.187) about our experiences that has enabled me to reclaim my past and articulate the subjective experience of class, illegitimacy and education, as both a learner and a teacher. For the first time, I have begun to be able to reconcile the contradictions between my values and beliefs and the demands of practice to realise that, maybe, they are not idiosyncratic to me but are phenomena experienced by others like me. I have found the courage to 'come out' as a working-class academic.

## **Chapter 5: Auto/biography as critical enquiry**

The gendered, [classed] multi-culturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that are then examined (methodology, analysis) in specific ways (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 23).

All research is, to some extent, driven by the way the researcher views the world, and as I approached my research I needed to find methodological approaches that were congruent with my underlying beliefs and values, my philosophies of life and my views of reality. I needed a theory which could encompass humanistic and subjectivist interests, yet also enable me to explain power arising from structural relationships in society. I sought a theory that could help me to reconstruct the internal conversations I have, as I interpret and navigate class and gender, focusing on critical decision-points in my life. The broad framework of critical realism, provided a philosophically informed theory to underpin my research approaches.

I have turned to symbolic interactionism, feminist theory and critical theory because they all address humanistic and subjectivist concerns (Merrill, in Merrill and West, 2009). Despite the apparent divergence of these theoretical perspectives, with symbolic interactionism focusing on the individual and interactions between them, and critical and feminist theory emphasising the collective influences on people's lives, I have used them in a complementary way in my auto/biographical research approach, valuing the diversity of the different analytical lenses they offer.

Explained in more detail later in this chapter I have adopted the term auto/biography as it recognises that it is very rare that autobiography does not contain many biographies of other people who appear, in different times and places, in the subject's life (Stanley, 1995). In this way auto/biography, is an autobiographical genre of writing and research, which challenges the idea of a single, stable or essential self and emphasises the construction of a reflexive account of self through the writing process (Stanley, 1995).

## **A values-led approach: The key theoretical perspectives**

### **Symbolic interactionism**

Symbolic interactionism is a study of the intersections of interaction, biography and social structure in particular historical moments (Denzin, 2004). Conceived by Mead (1934) and developed by Blumer, in its canonical form symbolic interactionism rests on the following root assumptions: 1) human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them; 2) the meanings of things arise out of the process of social interaction that one has with others and society; and 3) meanings are modified through an interpretive process which involves self-reflective individuals symbolically interacting with one another (Blumer 1981). In this way, human beings create the worlds of experience in which they live and the meanings of these worlds come from interaction which are shaped by the self-reflections people bring to their situations. Blumer argued (1981) that society consists of the joint or social acts which are formed and carried out by [its] members.

Symbolic interactionists commit themselves to the study and analysis of the developmental course of action that occurs when two or more people (or agents) with agency join their individual lines of action together into joint action. The concepts of action and agency are central to interactionist theories of the self and the interaction process (Blumer, 1981, p. 82). Interactionist research uses qualitative research methods to study social interaction, and/or individuals' selves through the examination of the everyday activities of the participants; a necessary approach for understanding the meaning of actions, defining situations as being constructed through the interaction of processes enacted by the participants. Symbolic interactionists enter the research field with their values disclosed and this is evident in the decisions about choosing what to study and in how they conduct the research.

Therefore, the symbolic-interaction approach is a micro-level orientation focusing on human interaction in specific situations. Contemporary symbolic interactionists study how narratives, represent experience and emphasise the reflexive, gendered, situated nature of human experience. In this way I have used my auto/biography to

reconstruct the internal conversation as I reflexively interpret and navigate the objective social structures in which I found myself.

Through this research I wanted to reclaim my experiences to find out exactly what it is that I am experiencing in the social context within which I live and work. I wanted to find out what has shaped my 'self' and formed my identity. Symbolic interactionism offers a model, with its emphasis on life story and the 'slice of life' approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998), to enable me to 'recover[ing] the personal' (Stanley and Wise, 1993).

With an emphasis on the importance of understanding everyday taken-for-granted activity, symbolic interactionism adopts a non-deterministic approach to both the person and the interpersonal interaction and instead takes the everyday and the person as both the topic of research and the resource with which it works (Stanley and Wise, 1993). So instead of focusing on the individual and their personality characteristics or on how the social structure causes the individual to behave, symbolic interactionists focus their attention on the nature of the interaction and on how self and society are made through a process of negotiation and interpretation (Merrill, in Merrill and West, 2009). As such, my thesis has become a means of documenting my responses to situations as they have occurred, at the same time as 'doing life' (Stanley and Wise, 1993). This in turn has influenced my experience of the research. There is evidence throughout the research of how I have responded to the research process in a reflexive way; I have allowed my research to be grounded in my consciousness which has resulted in a wholly organic and dynamic experience.

## **Critical theory**

Coming from socio-economic disadvantage, I wanted my research to challenge the political and ideological contexts within which I live and work. Critical theory offers a normatively grounded approach in which the vision of society is based on people living collectively 'in ways that encourage the free exercise of their creativity without foreclosing that of others' (Brookfield, 2005, p.39).

Brookfield argued that learning to create society means that individuals need to engage with:

learning to recognize and challenge ideology that attempts to portray the exploitation of the many by the few as a natural state of affairs, learning to uncover and counter hegemony, learning to unmask power, learning to overcome alienation and thereby accept freedom; learning to pursue liberation; learning to reclaim reason and learning to practice (sic) democracy (Brookfield, 2005, p.39).

These are the drivers for my own research. As Carspecken (1996) maintained highly value-driven researchers, often feel a personal need to conduct research as a way of challenging inequalities in people's life chances. Because of my own socio-economic history, I knew I could not even pretend to claim ideological or political neutrality as I entered the field. So the next sections of this chapter set out my ideological position.

The critical tradition draws on Marxist theory to illuminate the process by which an iniquitous society uses dominant ideology to convince people this is a normal state of affairs (Brookfield, 2005). Critical research is not merely intended to give an account of society and behaviour but aims to realise a society that is based on equality and democracy for all its members. It seeks to emancipate the disempowered, redress inequality and promote individual freedom (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). In this respect critical research is practical and political.

The essential features of critical methodology according to Carspecken (1996) are: 1) it should be used within cultural and social criticism as it supports efforts for change; 2) it recognises certain societal groups are privileged over others; 3) it recognises oppression is most forcefully reproduced when oppressed groups see their situation as inevitable, natural or necessary; 4) it recognises oppression has many faces and all forms should be studied and challenged and 5) it maintains that 'mainstream' research practices can (albeit unwittingly) be part of the oppression. Drawing on Horkheimer, Brookfield (2005) contends that critical theory has four distinctive characteristics. The first, and arguably the central characteristic, is that critical theory is firmly grounded in a particular political analysis in which there is a 'single

existential judgement' which argues that capitalism is a driving force for tension (Horkheimer, 1995, cited in Brookfield, 2005). The second distinctive characteristic is its concern to provide people with the knowledge and understanding so that they can free themselves from oppressive practice. The third defining characteristic is that critical theory envisages a fairer, less alienated, more democratic world. And the fourth and final characteristic is that society won't know whether critical theory is true or false until the world it envisages is created, and we can judge its relative humanity and compassion (Horkheimer, 1995 in Brookfield, 2005). As such, contends Brookfield (2005)

critical theory is normatively grounded in a vision of a society in which people live collectively in ways that encourage the free exercise of their creativity without foreclosing that of others. In such a society people see their individual well-being as integrally bound up with that of the collective. They act toward each other with generosity and compassion and are ever alert to the presence of injustice, inequity, and oppression (Brookfield, 2005, p.39).

From the perspective of critical theory, a critical adult is one who can discern how the ethics of capitalism and the logic of bureaucratic rationality, push people into ways of living that perpetuate economic, racial, and gender oppression (Brookfield, 2005). Thus critical epistemology, suggested Carspecken (1996), gives us principles for conducting valid enquiries into any kind of human experience. It does not, however, give a recipe for resolving inequalities. According to Kincheloe and McLaren (1994), critical research recognises 'that all thought is mediated by power relations which are socially and historically constituted; that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values; .... that the relationship between concept and object and signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by social relations of capitalist production and consumption' (Kincheloe 1994; 139)

Furthermore, to think critically about human experience is 'the ability of individuals to disengage themselves from the tacit assumptions of discursive practices and power relations in order to exert more conscious control over their everyday lives' (Kincheloe, 2000, p.24). For me, a critical approach means identifying and challenging



the dominant ideology and to use this to practise greater democracy (Brookfield, 2005), even if, as Brookfield (2005) suggests, I can do little about it as an individual.

Research in the critical tradition takes the form of self-conscious criticism (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2005). It 'begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain' (Madison, 2012, p. 5). This is what brought me to auto/biography; I wanted to explore the subjective experience of someone making class transition. As such, critical research is political, and like other critical researchers I am proud to announce my 'partisanship in the struggle for a better world' (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1994, p. 140). Most importantly for me, critical research has also proved to be a source of 'intellectual rebellion' (Thomas, 1993).

## **Feminist approaches**

When I say I am a feminist, it is an acknowledgement that I believe women are an oppressed social group - a group of people sharing a common exclusion from full participation society. To be a feminist means putting women first. So, it is no coincidence that I have engaged with feminist approaches to research because feminist research, too, challenges the issue of power in research. Feminist theory is critical theory; feminist critique is therefore necessarily political (Moi, 1991, p.1017). Feminist approaches to research explore the ways in which dominant knowledge practices disadvantage women by excluding them from enquiry; denigrating their 'feminine' cognitive styles and modes of knowledge; and producing theories of social phenomena that render women's activities and interests, or gendered power relations, invisible (Anderson, 2017).

By virtue of their different ascribed identities, individuals occupy different social roles that accord them different powers, duties, and role-given goals and interests. A central concept of feminist epistemology is that knowledge reflects the particular perspectives of the subject and women's ways of knowing (Belenky *et al.*, 1986). Based on the sexual division of labour, and the way that women have been, and still are, subordinated to men, even in today's society, women have a distinct way of

seeing, interpreting and being in the world that is different from men (Apthekar, 1989). Furthermore, Apthekar (1989) argues that 'this way knowing has to be at the centre...or a woman's scholarship... We have to believe in our own experiences and in the value of our ways of knowing, our ways of doing things' (Apthekar, 1989, p.254).

As such, feminist research is not a method, it is more a theory of the research process which combines political intent with an epistemological position; this influences the way the researcher approaches issues of power, responsibility and ethics in their research (Skeggs, 1997). There is no set of agreed principles upon research methods in feminist research; nor have feminists agreed upon one definition of feminist research (Stanley and Wise, 1993). Instead they offer that feminist research should be guided by a feminist epistemology which calls for research to be grounded in women's everyday experiences, which for me are not just gendered but are also 'classed'.

.... a feminist social science should begin with the recognition that 'the personal', direct experience underlies all behaviours and actions. We need to find out what it is we need to know and what it is that we experience. We need to reclaim, name and rename our experiences and our knowledge of the social world we live in and daily construct (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p.164).

This quote demonstrates a commitment to 'creat[ing] spaces for marginalised voices, those previously neglected in research or his-tory' (West, Bron and Merrill, 2014, p. 27). It acknowledges the importance of sharing women's experiences; thoughts and feelings that may not be acceptable in more positivist forms of research.

In this research I have drawn mostly on the third-wave feminism – 1990s to 2008, which focuses on embracing individualism and diversity. Feminist approaches place women and their experiences at the centre of the research process (something that is undeniable in my own research) to create an authentic and accurate understanding of what life is like so that all facets of oppression are revealed. As Stanley and Wise (1993) recognised 'without knowing *how* oppression occurs we cannot possibly know *why* it occurs; and without knowing how and why it occurs we cannot avoid its occurrence' (1993, p. 166) (Emphasis in the original). Feminist scholars argue that building knowledge from women's actual life

experiences is important if we are to address issues around misrepresentation and exclusion (Brooks, 2007). As such I am presenting my 'self' and my understandings of what is happening in my life. As Stanley and Wise (1993) have maintained 'we must make ourselves vulnerable, not to hide behind what *'they'* [my emphasis] are supposed to think, feel say, and do' (Ibid., p. 166).

In the next section I introduce the research approach of auto/biography. On the surface an auto/biographical approach may seem incongruous with critical and feminist theory because auto/biography is typically seen as being focused on the individual, whereas feminist and critical theory are concerned with social change. However, understanding my life and experiences as a working-class academic has meant revealing the connection between the public and private: the sociological imagination (Mills, 1959/2000). As Gramsci (1971) pointed out

The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces without leaving an inventory' (Gramsci, 1971 in Jackson, 1990, p.1).

## **Bringing a private life into public knowledge**

Having introduced my theoretical position, in this next section I introduce the research approach, auto/biography, and the research tools which include my autobiography, field notes and diary, and the collaborative narrative approach. The reader will notice that throughout the thesis I have used both terms: auto/biography and autobiography. The use of the slashed term 'auto/biography', predominant throughout the research, proffers a theoretically informed research approach which draws on Stanley's (1993) assertion that 'accounts of other lives influence how we see and understand our own and that our understandings of our own lives will impact on how we interpret others' lives' (1993, p. i). There are also incidences in which I use the term autobiography without the slash; this is where I have remained true to the original source.

## **Writing as enquiry**

From a theoretical position my focus on the personal in this thesis reveals a self-consciousness, a need to sift through my life for explanations and understanding of who I am and why (Jelinek, 1980). Therefore, I decided to use writing as a means of confronting my assumptions and beliefs. I hoped that the dynamic process of writing would provide a 'site of exploration and struggle' (Richardson, 1997, p. 87) and that through the process of writing I could explore the private and public self.

To stand outside oneself, to engage in self-judgement or self-description, requires a self-conscious standing back from the self in an effort to make claims about the sort of person one is (Jackson, 1990). It is a complex task which requires a form that keeps open an honest negotiation between specific incidents, atmospheres and events of a personal history, as well as a critical analysis that challenges conventional assumptions (Jackson, 1990). My intention was to write evocatively and provocatively, to tell a story from the position of the 'other' that offers a new perspective on social life and social processes (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). I have aimed for a self-conscious approach to writing, acknowledging the relationship between the research process, the writing process and the self, which has emphasised the emotional and personal dimensions of the research (Coffey, 1999).

## **Auto/biography as enquiry**

Within the family of biographical and narrative research, there are many different approaches that have evolved and many different meanings and applications of narrative accounts used by social scientists; for example: narrative; biography; ethnography; auto/biography; life history; autoethnography, critical autobiography; reflexive ethnography; narrative ethnography; interpretive biography. This makes precise definition and application complex.

When starting my research, I sought an approach that could help me to confront my 'self' as the individual within the broader context of society: my past, my family and my work, because as Stanley asserted 'no person is an island complete of itself'

(Stanley 1995, p.10), 'lives do not exist in a hermetically sealed vacuum; rather each symbiotically informs the form and the content of others' (Stanley, 1995, p.125).

Because of this, I was convinced that the methodological approach was more concomitant with autoethnography. Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing which is also 'a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context' (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p.9). It, like auto/biography, is a reflexive self-examination within our own (auto) cultural and/or professional context (ethno), through a process of writing as enquiry (graphy) (Richardson, 1997). However, as I started to write I found the 'ethno', the cultural or professional context, to be less significant. What became more important was the connectedness of family and social networks in influencing and shaping my life (Stanley, 1995), so the actual process of writing led me towards a method of auto/biographical writing that emphasised intersubjective relationships, rather than the relationship between the self and the environment. Consequently, I chose auto/biography as an autobiographical genre of writing and research because it challenges the traditional genre, the autobiography, in which the person writes about the self. Instead, it enters the contested space between the socio-cultural and the psychosocial. In this approach, research is seen as an interactive process shaped by the researcher's 'own history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p.9). Auto/biography is an interpretivist approach drawing on qualitative data; it does not offer the statistical significance, standardised procedures, reliability, replication, and generalizability or positivist approach. Yet, like any autobiographical writing, it can present strong, powerful and effective data (Merrill and West, 2009).

It was Stanley (1995) who coined the term auto/biography because it 'refuses any easy distinction between biography and autobiography, instead recognising their symbiosis' (1995, p.127). Stanley's conception of auto/biography encapsulates the key elements of Merton's (1972) analytic attention to insider and outsider positions and feminist approaches to research, which attempts to raise the consciousness of the position of women. Drawing on the work of Barthes (1975, in Stanley, 1995) Stanley

focused on the many facets of the auto in auto/biographical writing and makes an important tripartite distinction. There is

‘the self who **writes** constructs a self who **was** (an other self for biography, a past self for autobiography); but there is also a self who **is**, outside of the text as it is written, who continues to grow older and to change after it is completed but is prototypically unmentioned’ (Stanley, 1995, p.131-2). (Emphasis in the original).

In this way auto/biography disputes the conventional distinction between biography and autobiography as well as the divisions between self/other, public/private, immediacy/memory, personal and political (Stanley, 1993). Auto/biography acknowledges that the biographical self and autobiographical self can overlap and recognises that knowledge is contextual, situational and specific and when writing about the ‘self’ it cannot be written without acknowledging the variety of social network of others that a life moves between (Stanley, 1993). Thus, auto/biography, according to Stanley (1995), is an autobiographical genre of writing and research which challenges the idea of a single, stable or essential self and emphasises the construction of a reflexive account of self through the writing process.

All too often, educational research appears to be disembodied and to have no life. Therefore, feminist auto/biography offers a genre of autobiographical writing and research that displays multiple levels of consciousness focusing on the inter-relationship between the constructions of one’s own life and the lives of others, connecting the personal with the social and enabling an understanding of sociocultural and psychosocial dynamics in people’s lives (Merrill and West, 2009). It allows for an exploration of key factors such as the interplay of structure/agency, of gender/class/ethnicity and a particular habitus, and the development of identity/selfhood, grounded in the narratives of lived experience (West, 2014). So, rather than seeing auto/biography as a way of retreating into personal inner subjectivity, we should view auto/biography as a way to establish intersubjectivity (West, 2014).

Furthermore, as Roth (2005) suggests, drawing on the work of Derrida auto/biography comes to life through the engagement of the reader. Any auto/biography is therefore never quite owned by the author and principal figure of the account, because any meaning of the text arises from the interaction of text and reader.

Using auto/biography, I want to push the boundaries of autobiographical research to show that auto/biographical approaches can be written by the self, about the self and still be valid and robust, and furthermore to show that auto/biographical writing can be used to construct knowledge and speak to power.

Within the auto/biographical approach I am writing autobiographically. Consequently, my story makes reference to people in my life, past and present; it is through these connections I have made with others that has enabled me to reflect on my own history and my social and cultural location. Through an auto/biographical approach paying attention to the subjective dimensions of classed experience, I am able to provide insights into mechanisms of class, and into class's 'hidden injuries' (Sennett and Cobb, 1977), which may be missed by more conventional, objectivist approaches.

### **Autobiography – the research tool<sup>7</sup>**

Auto/biography is a research tool that offers an account told by the individual on one's own initiative, involving the act of making meaning out of life's events and describing a self, in the process of articulating the experiences (Yow, 2005).

The capacity of story for 'validating the interconnectedness of the past, the present, the future, the personal, and the professional in an educator's life'

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<sup>7</sup> I have stayed true to the term autobiography in this section as I have drawn on literature that uses this term

(Beattie, 1995, p.54 quoted by Clough, 2002) is immense and powerful (Clough, 2002, p.99)

The term autobiography is first thought to be used by Robert Southey in 1809 (Anderson, 2001; Cline and Angier, 2010) but as Cline and Angier argue, autobiography probably has a form that dates back to antiquity where autobiographies were typically entitled 'apologia'. The word's three Latin roots: autos, bios, and graphe - meaning self, life, and writing, give us 'writing of the self'. Probably the most widely quoted definition of autobiography is

A retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his [sic] own existence, focusing on his individual life in particular the story of his personality (Lejeune, 1989, p.3)

Lejeune (1989) stipulates that in order for the narrative to be autobiographical the author, the narrator and the protagonist must be identical; this would be expressed as auto-diegetic narrative. Thus, autobiography is a 'privileged but troubled narrative because it is both subjective and objective, reflective and reflexive, and in which the narrator is the central figure' (Bruner, 2004, p. 693). It offers 'rich insights into the dynamic interplay of individuals and history, inner and outer worlds, self and other' (Merrill and West, 2009, p.1); it is a means of 'invit[ing] readers into the lived experience of a presumed 'other' and to experience it viscerally' (Boylorn and Orbe, 2014, p.15). Importantly autobiography relies on a pact between the writer and the reader that the account is true (Anderson, 2001). According to West *et al.* (2007), autobiographical narrative method has a

unique potential to illuminate people's lives and their interaction with the social world and the interplay of history and micro worlds, in struggles for agency and meaning in lives. And to illuminate the interplay of different experiences and forms of learning – from the most intimate to the most formal. (West *et al.* 2007, p. 280)

Yet even within autobiographical writing there are a large number of ways that 'a 'life' can be written' (Stanley, 1993, p. 47). Gordon (1988) suggested that autobiographers can adopt any of three (overlapping) strategies to 'relieve the self-consciousness inherent in writing about themselves and to throw attention forward to the truth of



their meaning' (1988, p. 106). The first is to present themselves as objective historians; the second is to overtly dramatise an individual history through the use of scene, situation, and developing narrative. Finally, the autobiographer can reduce action and 'character to significant moments and images, and correspondingly intensify a narrative monologue that probes and circles these moments and images' (Gordon, 1998, p. 106). While the use of fiction is very appealing for many writers of autobiography, because for them, fiction may enable more truth about a life to be written (Stanley, 1995), I believe that fiction poses a threat to the autobiographical canon that autobiography is a factual account (Stanley, 1995). I have therefore chosen to write a first person account of the significant moments in my life history in my own voice. Using this strategy, my task has been to chronicle my life experiences using a narrative approach, 'which involves a temporal sequencing of events, including having a beginning, middle and end' (Merrill and West 2009, p.10) and explain them theoretically, using a range of sociological, historical and narrative theories. In the spirit of feminist approaches, I want to share not only the facts about the past and the present but also my feelings, as I struggle with life's eventualities to tell the story of 'who I was to who I am'.

It is the intimate and often hidden details of the author's life that makes auto/biography distinctive; the power of the auto/biography lies not in nostalgia but in the courage to confront painful memories. Even at this final stage of my thesis, to introduce one's childhood in to a piece of writing intended for an academic audience feels unintellectual. However, I hope that by the end I will have dealt appropriately with the relationship between past and present, and between self and other, with honesty and integrity.

What we choose to write about, how we choose to write it, and for whom we choose to write, says a lot about who we are as people and as academics (Richardson, 1997). My story is an individual story but it could also be what Richardson (1997) calls a 'collective story..... a story which tells the experience of a sociologically constructed category of people in the context of larger socio-cultural and historical forces' (1997, p.14). Through sharing my own personal experience of my movement across class categories, I aim to raise awareness of the types of challenges encountered by people

who, like me, have occupied both a middle-class and a working-class habitus within the same lifetime.

Whilst narrative has enabled me to problematise the effects of my actions and decisions, it is an inescapable fact that my story runs the risk of being written 'uncritically', becoming a mere recount of events of the past, or worse, more to do with concealment and deception in which life is rewritten as bildungsroman (Jelinek, 1980). I cannot escape the admission that the boundaries between self-indulgence and reflectivity in auto/biographical research are fragile, and that in writing an auto/biographical account I am in danger of self-indulgence (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). Indeed, this is why I resisted the autobiographical research method at the beginning of my research journey. However, Mykhalovskiy (1997, cited in Sikes, 2008) contends that autobiographical research per se is not necessarily narcissistic or self-indulgent, and that auto/biographical writing can instead be a source of insightful analysis which reacts against the insularity of intellectual, academic or disciplinary writing.

A huge advantage of auto/biographical writing is that it allows for the interpretation of the collected data to be analysed over time, and for additional memories and analysis to be included. To be able to take the time to add, expand and explain the response some time later, so as not to detract from the data but further to enrich the analysis, has enabled me write more coherently about my experiences. This approach was central to my data analysis in that it ensured a cyclical process in which theory was linked to thinking about experiences, and this was then, in turn, linked back to theory. The constant revisiting of my memories, my field notes and reflective diary, provided a transitional space (Merrill and West, 2009, p. 121) in which I was able to explore how I have moved towards a greater sense of self identity and a greater sense of legitimacy (Ibid.).

Whilst engaged in the research processes, three phases of the research emerged naturally and organically; this was not planned and the phases were not predetermined at the outset. Phase one consisted of writing an auto/biography of my experiences up until I became a teacher educator; phase two examined my current

context as an educated working-class woman working, researching and studying within the academy; and phase three, which was introduced towards the end of the research process, was designed to help me critically analyse my data through a collaborative narrative approach in which I was engaged in a reflexive process with my theoretical friends and my supervisor.

### **Phase 1: Theorising the self in auto/biography**

In phase one of my research, chapter 6, I start by exploring how and why I have been able to make the transition from working-class child to middle-class teacher educator/academic in higher education. Through a critical auto/biographical approach, I focus on my family, educational history and work experiences; in particular, the key experiences that highlighted social justice, or lack of it, in the form of disrespect and symbolic violence, and how this also engendered agency.

In this data phase, through a layered account (Ronai, 1995), my memories and reflections of the past are written in Courier font to make it look like a traditionally typewritten diary. These memories are interwoven with a critical commentary, with reference to the theoretical frameworks.

I have tried to use my memory as accurately as possible, to offer the facts to be as true as possible to my authentic experiences, and to strike a balance between the historical perspective and my personal involvement. I hope that where I have written about the historical background, it has helped to set the context of my lived experiences, enabling the reader to recognise and reconstruct the place for themselves. I have endeavoured not to sentimentalise remembrance, although it is important to acknowledge that my memory of the past is constructed by limited and partial evidence available to me. However, as Tripp (2012) contends, the events that are easily recalled stay with us because they are highly charged, 'we cringe or stand tall when we touch them in memory' (2012, p.98). There are certainly some of these type of events in my auto/biography but most of the events recalled have been

remembered because they are what Tripp (Ibid.) refers to as 'war stories' - stories that are used to illustrate successes and failures. In particular, I have recounted a number of turning-points when I have been agentic in response to challenging situations, as well as points at which other people, in one way or another, have been instrumental in changing my social, material and personal circumstances. There are also some 'forgotten' incidents, most of which are too trivial or insignificant to recall, but clearly some incidents were forgotten because they were painful to remember, although there are some occasional glimpses of 'resurrected ghosts' (Tripp, 2012, p.98). It is important to remember that as data, historical critical incidents are merely fragments of everything that actually occurred. I am not aiming to create a complete personal history but I do hope that by the end of the recount I have written an authentic account. It would be remiss to assert that from a methodological viewpoint, historical 'critical incidents' are unproblematic, - distortion that occurs in memory, reconstruction and analysis is something that cannot be ignored.

## **Phase 2: Complicating everyday work encounters**

In chapters seven and eight, I enter phase two of the research process when I bring my auto/biography up-to-date. In phase two I have combined my memories and reflections with some primary data in the form of contemporary diary entries (typed in Bradley Hand to represent handwritten notes). Again, my critical narrative is written in this, the main font used throughout the thesis.

In these chapters, I write about my experiences within academia. For the past five years, I have maintained two documents: my field notes (FN) and my reflective diary (RD). The intention was to capture continuously key events, including my emotional response, in a bid to try to understand some of the tensions and dilemmas I face as a working-class academic. My field notes (FN) are written in the context of the situation and they include: notes from conferences; tutorials with my supervisors; methodological notes; and literature reviews, - these have formed a historical record of the lived experience of being a teacher educator and a doctoral student. My reflective diary is a different genre altogether. This text is often written at the end of

the day so relies on the recall of events as they have happened, and includes thoughts, feelings and emotional responses to situations in context. Often they have been double annotated with my later reflections, or have been discussed as part of a collaborative narrative – more on this below. These two documents contain every episode that is written about; if it is not in either of these sources it did not happen.

This part of my account represents the lived experience of ‘being a teacher educator’, the ‘focus is on connecting the autobiographical with the ethnographic, and in particular to tell stories that are informed by and help make sense of lives in a cultural context’ (Boylorne and Orbe, 2014, p.18), but with particular emphasis on the connections with others. In these two chapters I have sought to interrogate cultural experience from the inside out. As can be seen from my field notes and reflective diary, this account is often based on serendipitous events occurring as I am going about my everyday life.

I have resisted presenting myself as competent, controlled, knowledgeable and confident. Rather, I have written a rich, full representation of my experience that includes the messy stuff - the self-doubts, the mistakes and the inconsistencies. In this way, the information given stops being abstract and theoretical, and instead becomes a series of more passionate, critical ideas in public life that grow from personal incidents, relationships and episodes. In this way, the auto/biography starts from a place in which feelings and personal experiences are the source from which later theorising can emerge (Jackson, 1990).

However, unlike biographical and ethnographical methods in which the researcher interprets stories and events of the lives of others, for both of these phases of my research I was responsible for analysing and interpreting my own data. I wrote at length in a language that was personal, recalling experiences and feelings related to my subjective experiences of class transition. Writing my auto/biography created tremendous emotion and the temptation to hide from it has, on occasion, been almost irresistible. It resulted in me struggling with the process of transition from the empirical material contained in my field notes and reflective diary, to presenting and analysing the data. At times I became stuck, unable to make sense of what the data

was telling me – it was too close, too personal and sometimes too painful. The writing process had highlighted how difficult it was to access and articulate aspects of self that I had learned to deny, or wanted to forget. I knew the data was rich and powerful but I could not find a way to unlock it. I needed to find a way to step back so that my consciousness could move back and forth between the researcher and the researched.

I found out that even auto/biographical research cannot be wholly a solitary endeavour. It was for this reason that I introduced a third phase of data collection using the collaborative narrative approach. For collaborative narrative I have used Humnst 777, a contemporary font to indicate conversation. The data analysis is written in the principal font (Cambria) presented throughout the thesis to indicate a more objective researcher position.

### **Phase 3: Talking as enquiry - the collaborative narrative approach**

However, as I was coming to the completion of analysing my data, I realised I was too close to the data; it was too visceral. Over the course of my research, my supervisor, Alys (pseudonym), and I had been engaging in conversations about my data in our supervisory meetings, but in an informal way. Through these conversations we recognised that, as a middle-class woman, she was in a good position to confront my values, beliefs and assumptions by asking provocative questions from her own position. This was so powerful we decided to formalise the process and make it constitute part of the data. So as a reflexive researcher I adapted Arvey's (2003) collaborative narrative approach. In this way, my supervisor and I entered a cooperative space in order to help me negotiate issues around voice and representation in the research text, that up until this point was making it difficult for me to interpret my own data. This became a unique feature of my auto/biographical approach.

Arvey (2003) contends that multiple perspectives influence knowledge production and suggests that the collaborative narrative approach, located within narrative enquiry, offers a reflexive method to social science research, through using a

collaborative narrative to co-construct knowledge. In the original model which is based around researcher and participant interactions, Arvay (1998), suggested seven stages of the research process in collaborative narrative approach: 1) setting the stage; 2) the performance, – co-constructing the research interview; 3) the transcription process; 4) collaborative interpretive readings: 5) the interpretive interview; 6) writing the narratives; and, 7) sharing the story. Not all of these stages were relevant, or indeed appropriate, to my own research, in which I have a sample of one, so Alys and I entered at stage two of the collaborative narrative process, and omitted stage six. The data in chapters eight and nine represent stage seven. Using my auto/biographical data, including my field notes and reflective diary, Alys and I collaboratively participated to engage with the transcribed text in a meaningful way. We talked openly about our own interpretations of the data. Our practice adhered to Arvay's (2003) guidance and we interrogated my, as the narrator, various 'I' positions: How am I situated/positioned in the narrative? What was I feeling? How have I presented myself? What meaning am I trying to convey? What parts of 'self' do I share and what parts are kept hidden? And importantly, as the protagonist of my own story, what do I want to convey to the reader?

As Arvay (2003) suggests, the purpose of this reading is to illuminate the ways in which the narrator constructs themselves in the text. In this situation, the co-investigator (my supervisor) steps into a new role as a co-interpreter of the research text. As hoped, my research narrative developed through dialogue and the approach became a final integral part of my research process. At times this conversation was moving and informative as we made attempts to understand the ambiguous parts of the narrative account through different cultural interpretations. Alys helped me to view the issues I was raising from multiple viewpoints (including her own as a middle-class woman). The reader will see evidence of Alys asking questions like: Where do you think you learned that? What were your feelings about that? There seems to be something left out here - something not said. What do you think this section is about? What did you learn from this experience? There is something that I see in this section, what do you think? How does my interpretation fit with yours? It was not her aim to challenge my thoughts and perceptions, but more a way for her to help me expose assumptions that I took for granted.

In this scenario I, as the researcher and the subject of the research process, was able to assume a dual consciousness: to tell the story as narrator whilst at the same time reflecting on the story told as researcher, constantly moving between these two positions as the story unfolded. As in Arvay's (1998) model, the researcher and co-investigator both hold multiple 'I' positions in the exchange as various possible 'selves' interact. It was this opportunity to negotiate multiple and shifting meanings through voicing our understandings equitably that moved my thinking forward.

In Arvay's (2003) model, the sixth stage is to summarise the collaborative readings into one blended text. I have deliberately chosen not to do this as I wanted to show the power of the collaborative approach in helping me to interpret my own data. An approach that I think is unique to autobiographical research. Instead, the conversations were transcribed to communicate the content of the conversation, being very careful to anonymise and disguise all other parties involved, including my supervisor, so that anonymity was preserved. This has also meant that dates are disguised.

At the time we did not know whether the approach would work, but the conversations that ensued enabled me to successfully critically examine the 'moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion' (Bhabha, 1994, p.1) providing a landscape for an in-depth analysis of my values, beliefs and assumptions.

Without this collaborative process, my story would have relied solely on my own interpretation of the meaning of my own lived experiences. To reveal aspects of myself, - the hidden, the silenced, and the private, - there had to be trust. I will share in chapter eight more details about the trusting relationship Alys and I have formed as we walked the PhD pathway together.

I had to trust the process would unfold and meaning-making would develop dialogically (Arvay, 2003). All of these 'complex negotiated accounts' are not always represented explicitly in my data – sometimes they were used merely to enable me to



critically examine my own data; but some of the resultant conversations serve as phase three of the research data and are presented and analysed in chapter eight.

In chapter eight there is clear evidence of our conversations bringing new meaning through co-construction. With hindsight I think the process would have worked much better if I had introduced the collaborative narrative approach at the beginning of the research, rather than at the end; this is something that I will take forward into future research projects.

## **Using literature as an interpretive tool**

As I have already shared in chapter four, I have used academic literature and theory as a place of healing. As Brookfield (1995) has claimed, theoretical literature can help us investigate what we do and think, and importantly break the circle of familiarity. Therefore, I have used theory as a mode of interpretation, making it part of the research method to interpret or illuminate a social phenomenon. Literature has helped me make reality clearer; it has provided me with a different language, one not caught up with the assumptions and inscriptions of policy-makers or the immediacy of practice, or rooted in dogma and ideology (Ball, 1997).

I have found the work (including the auto/biographical accounts of their own research) of Bourdieu (2007), Horton and Freire (1990), hooks (1994), and Giroux (2014) particularly inspiring. These authors have made me think deeply about my own experiences but have also given me the language to speak for myself.

The study of theoretical literature becomes a psychological and political survival necessity, through which teachers come to understand the link between their private troubles and the broader political processes (Brookfield, 1995, p.38).

Reading for my thesis has taken me beyond my day-to-day context and has enhanced my practice 'by offering unfamiliar interpretations of familiar events' (Brookfield,

1995, p.186). As Brookfield (Ibid) maintained, theory can suggest new and provocative ways of seeing ourselves. In particular, it has enabled me to resist what Brookfield (1995) calls 'groupthink': an uncritical adherence to practice. So in this way, reading has become the beginning of my research. Bourdieu and Honneth, in particular, have produced moments of struggle and pain which has then brought ontological and epistemological recognition. I have read my story and, with their theories at the forefront of my thinking, I have attempted to untangle the mass of confusion about self and identity. Freire (1990) suggests that

In this way studying means finding something, and the act of finding brings with it a certain taste, a certain amount of happiness that is creation and recreation. No it is not easy, but it is good to be done. (Freire, 1990, p.37)

I have also found that reading others' depictions of their lives as marginalised academics because of class, race or gender or indeed an intersection of all three, including those with whom I have found solidarity already mentioned on [page 83](#), a welcome source of literature to support my own study. Through reading these texts, and more besides, I have been able to engage in a simulated conversation (Brookfield, 1995) about social class, gender and ethnicity to develop new ways of seeing.

I have many books that I 'have talked with' (Brookfield, 1995, p.187) 'because some books are like persons..... I become better able to understand the theory inside my action' (Freire in Horton and Freire, 1990, p.36). These are the books that have comments written in the margins, pages turned down, and are full of post-it notes. I feel that I am working collaboratively within an esteemed community of scholars who have wrestled with similar issues to me, as I try to make sense of a personal but also a more general phenomenon of social class and education.

## **Making sense, making meaning**

Writing auto/biographically, although at times emotional and painful was, in terms of generating data, comparatively straightforward compared to the process of analysis.

The attempt to draw out the essential meaning of the raw data in determining my findings was a difficult process, so I used a variety of approaches across the different phases of the research, based on the phase of the research and the stage of analysis within that phase.

When analysing phase one of the research data, my *auto/biography* – chapter six, I initially used the ‘thinking units’ (Lofland and Lofland, 1995) of habitus, capital and field to confront my *auto/biography*. In this first phase of data analysis I applied literature as an interpretive tool. These units, based on Bourdieu’s framework of habitus, capital and field, enabled me to begin to identify experiences of lived relations of class. But after the initial phase of analysis I realised that, while Bourdieu helped me explain ‘classed’ experiences, his framework was limited in helping me to explain how and why I came to be ‘une miraculée’. As such I sought another framework to guide me. This is when I introduced Honneth’s framework of recognition: love, rights and solidarity.

In phase two of the research process, the analysis of chapters seven and eight, in which I have combined my *memories and reflections* with primary data in the form of *contemporary diary entries in my reflective diary (RD) and my field notes (typed in Bradley Hand)*, I practice a different analytical strategy. Firstly, the data was transcribed from my personal, hand-written notes and texts in chronological order. I read and re-read and as I did so, I looked for emergent holistic themes arising out of the corpus of data. This enabled me to determine some headings: disillusionment, estrangement, illegitimacy, and self and identity. I then used these headings to help me make further sense of the rest of the data. I was then able to use the theoretical frameworks of Honneth and Bourdieu to offer explanations for the feelings of being ‘othered’.

As I have already acknowledged – phase three of the data collection method emerged when I was struggling to make sense of what the data was telling me. I was too close and the data was personal and sometimes too painful. It was for this reason that I introduced an additional and unplanned stage of data collection using *collaborative*

narrative. In this phase of the data collection, both my supervisor Alys and I talked around and developed the themes I had identified in phase two of the research process, to draw conclusions about each of these themes. It was a process that my supervisor had engaged with throughout our supervisory conversations but I had not recognised it as a crucial point for data collection.

## **Researching ethically**

### **Guiding principles**

Like most research involving human beings, my research is directed towards advancing knowledge and understanding. This research has been undertaken to help illuminate human experiences and dispel ignorance about the lived experience of people from lower socio-economic groups. As in any research, I have a responsibility to maintain the integrity of the research itself for the people who are included in my research data, and for the broader social implications of the research. Each of these responsibilities has presented some challenges which are explored in the rest of this chapter.

Auto/biographical work appears to convey lots of academic freedom, but it also carries with it significant responsibilities, including the need to ensure that research meets high ethical standards which include honesty integrity, accountability, alongside thoughtful enquiry, rigorous analysis and the application of professional standards (my institution's 'Introduction to ethical issues and principles in research', 2014). Researchers have a clear responsibility to ensure that they recognise and protect the rights and general well-being of their participants, regardless of the nature of their research. With this in mind, my research was bound by the guiding ethical principles provided by the awarding institution and the awarding institution's Code of Conduct on Research Practice (2015) which include: Autonomy; Free and informed consent; Veracity; Respect for vulnerable persons; Privacy and confidentiality; Justice and inclusiveness; Harms and benefits (Ibid). Please see [Appendix 1 and 2](#) for ethics review checklist.

The confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm for the conduct of research. Of particular importance in this research was the notion of free and informed consent and privacy and confidentiality; it could be argued that voluntary participation and free and informed consent was not given by the other 'actors' in my own story. It could be brought into question that aspects of their lives were disclosed without their consent. For this reason, I also checked the guidelines as set out by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2011). BERA (2011) acknowledges that participants in research can 'simply be part of the context e.g. where students are part of the context but not the subjects of a teacher's research into his or her own professional practice' (2011, p.5) but they suggest that researchers must consider the extent to which their research impinges on the other, as researchers must recognise the participants' entitlement to privacy and must accord them their rights to confidentiality and anonymity. This will be discussed further in the context of autobiographical research and indeed with reference to my own research data, later in this chapter.

BERA (2011) highlighted that all researchers have a strong responsibility to the community of educational researchers and must protect the integrity and reputation of educational research by ensuring that they conduct their research to the highest standards. Researchers must therefore not bring research into disrepute by, for example, falsifying research evidence or findings – this is something that I am acutely aware could be levelled at this research data as it is written by both the subject and the author. As autobiographical narratives enter into the public domain, conflict occurs between the author's ownership of her or his experience and the readers' right to know the truth. I have no way of proving my story is true. As I have already acknowledged, I have tried to use my memory as accurately as possible to offer facts that are as true as possible to my authentic experiences, but it is important to acknowledge that my memory of the past is constructed by the limited and partial evidence available to me. As such, my research was led by my values and beliefs; this is what led to the enquiry. Nevertheless, I was careful not to let my value orientations determine my research findings. So, as Denzin (2014) argued, validity in this research can only be given internally, by the claim it makes and offers to the reader.

## **Ethical principles underpinning auto/biographical research**

Much of the research and guidance about the importance of the ethical conduct within sociological (and other) research is the relationship and responsibilities of the researcher towards the research participants, which includes informed consent, respect for privacy, subject integrity, avoidance of exploitation and betrayal, and protection from harm as described above. Furthermore, there are always discussions about the balance of power between the research participants and the researcher at all stages of the research process, but neither of these are relevant when writing autobiographically in one's own research.

Autobiography [auto/biography] can be viewed as a research tool that straightforwardly enables the private and personal worlds of actors to be brought into the public domain (Harrison and Lyon, 1993). But in reality I have found that telling the story of one's own life is a risky business, one that involves a high level of ethical and moral responsibility. While there is a wealth of ethical guidance for researchers who are writing biographies, or collecting autobiographical narratives of others, there seems to be a distinct lack of guidance for researchers who are writing auto/biographically as part of their own research. I have found that I have had to make my own way through issues, as they have arisen, which in itself has proved to be an invaluable but challenging experience.

Although I have written about selected events, or aspects of my personal experiences, which include other people, the 'I', as the researcher, is the main subject of the research. As it is clear that I am not the sole object in the research data, I cannot be exonerated from ethical responsibilities arising out of researcher/participant relationships. As I have already argued, auto/biography does not present the self in isolation, my life has not happened in a 'hermetically sealed vacuum' (Stanley, 1995, p.120), I am, like everyone else, involved in relationships, institutions, and society which contextualises the narrative. The use of an auto/biographical account and a personal diary cannot possibly exclude those with whom I have interacted, this presented ethical dilemmas. Ethical issues relating to the use of auto/biographical data, including the other actors in my story, were identified and reflected upon within

and throughout the research process. I have made every effort to ensure that privacy and anonymity was assured for both the individual and the institution. As I have written, I have constantly and continuously asked myself about how the individuals I have written about might feel about being included in the research.

The issue of consent posed a real dilemma because if the purpose of auto/biography is a presentation of self, as perceived and experienced by the self, gaining the consent of all others is nigh on impossible. Sometimes, this meant careful consideration of whether the data should stay in, by ensuring that the data was deeply concealed, or deleting it altogether, but this has implications for the 'truth'. As Eakin (2004) argued 'when life writers fail to tell the truth, they do more than violate a literary convention governing nonfiction as a genre; they disobey a moral imperative' (2004, p.2-3).

So the real, and personal, ethical dilemma for me was how I can still present the biographies of the other actors in my research in a way that is respectful and ethical. How much of my own story can be told when the rights of others in my story have been ignored in order to retain the integrity of my personal perspective? At times, I have made difficult decisions between telling the truth and protecting those who are actors in my research data. Often personal morality took precedence which has meant that some aspects of the truth have been denied, or at least obscured, so at times the reader may be able to identify small gaps in the research data or be left with some questions. I reserve the right to defend this position in order to protect others, in particular, some of the principle characters in my research as discussed below.

### **Ethical principles: Protecting myself and others**

While this research is based almost solely on my auto/biography, it also includes other actors within the context of the research data, including some very significant others in my story that I need to pay special attention to. This final section aims to explore the problematic relationship of the autobiographer, or self, to the other key actors in the research data. The actors in my story are there by implication; I know realistically, and indeed ethically, I should provide an opportunity for them to at least

read and comment on what I have written about them. Regrettably that prospect is not open to me.

There are three particularly ethically sensitive areas; firstly, my responsibility to the institution within which I work; secondly my responsibility to the other key actors in my research data, most notably my family and colleagues, and thirdly my responsibility to myself.

### **The institution**

There is no denying that 'qualitative research that frames its purpose in the context of critical theoretical concerns still produces undeniably dangerous knowledge, the kind of information and insights that upsets institutions' (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1994, p.138). This research is being conducted at a time of high emotional and financial stakes for Higher Education Institutions, and in particular, faculties responsible for initial teacher education. I have already written about the fragile identity of my own institution so I had to be particularly vigilant about how the data about my own organisation was recorded and presented so that the data does not damage the reputation of the institution at a time when university-based teacher education is under scrutiny. Despite my own feelings about the nature of what we are currently practising in the faculty, I have tried to write sensitively about the moral, ethical and financial challenges senior management within the organisation are facing as I had no desire to criticise any one person or groups of individuals – I truly recognise the constraints that they are under.

I also needed to think deeply about the dignity and privacy of the people with whom I work, and indeed teach. I am aware that somebody from my own institution could read, and interpret a scenario about them in a way which may make them feel I have misrepresented them. In answer to that accusation, I have taken extra care to record events in my current context as accurately as I could by sticking as closely as I can to the facts as I remember them; but I am also aware that there may some instances where I cross the line of privacy. I have been careful to report what happened, while



being cognizant of people's rights to privacy or I have made clear that this was my opinion, based on my perspective of the event or matter under scrutiny. I maintain that the setting and the characters are sufficiently well disguised, so that readers outside the context of my examination will not be able to recognise either. I can do no more than reinforce my conviction that I have done all I can to disguise the nature of the organisation and the people within. In specific cases, where I have included data about or from a specific student, for example the letter in chapter seven, I have explicitly sought their permission and I have used pseudonyms throughout.

### **Significant others**

There is contained within my story previously undisclosed details of my life, and of other people who appear in different times and places, and I needed to be sensitive to that. I have taken responsibility and great care to protect the lives of all the people who have played a part in my history, who may/may not agree with my version of events, by anonymising/disguising the data and the context as far as possible; this includes those individuals who appear only fleetingly in my story. However, there are those like my immediate family who I have had to pay much closer attention to.

Both my brother and my husband appear only briefly in the research data, which may appear peculiar to the reader, so I feel a brief explanation is needed. My brother appears in my early auto/biography, in a supporting role to the main protagonist: my mum. He ceases to be considered in my 'adult' story, because it would not serve any purpose to include him after that point. We had a difficult childhood and subsequently our relationship was not always what it could have, and should have been, and this brings its own fragilities. I have tried to deal with our story in my data and I hope that when he reads it (which he will), my brother will feel I have been honest, whilst at the same time have not intruded on his privacy. He may disagree with the story I have presented, and of course multiple interpretations of the same event will exist, but this is my story and I have tried to write it as honestly as I can, without influence.

My husband is mentioned all too briefly in my data, not because I don't value his love, his companionship and his never-ending faith in me, but because the story of my adult life in the thesis is dominated by my 'becoming a teacher educator'. The story becomes much more focused on my professional motivations and much less on intimate personal relationships at that point. I have shared the data with him and he is happy with the way that he is represented in the research data.

Before I go on to mention the most significant supporting character in the research, my mum, I need to mention briefly the people that I have explicitly mentioned in sections that refer to love, rights and solidarity. My supervisors have of course read the thesis as part of the supervisory process and I do have the explicit agreement of my research supervisor to include our conversations, carried out in collaborative narrative. I have been careful to remove any general conversational material not directly related to the research. I have assumed the assent of both supervisors with reference to the data contained in chapter eight, as both supervisors have read the chapter and have not expressed any concerns about the material contained therein. I have also sought permission of my loving friends to include my reflections on our relationship – sharing with them what I have written, so that they have had the opportunity to ask me to withdraw that section.

## **My mum**

There is no denying the most significant relationship of all. So, despite sharing intimate aspects of my own life, I am most worried about how my mum will feel about what I have written about her, and her husband, because 'every act of writing a person's life is a violation' (Josselson, 1996, p.62). In most 'participant research', research subjects can choose to opt out of the research at any point; they can refuse permission for the material to be used – my mum (indeed all the actors) did not have this option and this has raised many ethical questions for me.

As I have sought an understanding of my 'self' as a white educated woman, I looked to my childhood, and especially the relationship with my mum, as the foundation of

my adult psychology. As will be revealed in the research data, the relationship with my mum is complex; my mum now represents a place that I no longer belong. Sadly, the relationship has left both of us in a spiral of emotional conflict, which has left us both vulnerable.

The way I have portrayed my mum and our relationship has caused me substantial anxiety during the process of writing the research. I am certain that she should be included, and I am confident in the way that I have represented our relationship, as it is my interpretation of the experience. But what I am less clear about is the tension between truth and ethics, as mentioned above. Should my respect for our (both mine and my mum's) privacy take precedence over the need for telling the truth; or should verisimilitude take precedence over our need for privacy? I have had to make a judgement on that and what you will see before you is as truthful as I can be. Even though my mum is absent in my life, her absence still assumes significance. I still feel fiercely protective of her – she is my mum after all. In light of this I have presented a partial story; one that I hope gives a good enough picture of my growing up, whilst at the same time going some way towards protecting my mum's feelings.

### **The 'I' and the 'me'**

The final ethical dilemma is about my own relationship with the testimony. Using auto/biography as a research approach has presented a number of personal challenges. There is no intermediary in my story, as I am both the researcher and participant in my own study. Consequently, I need to acknowledge that my representation of events is my interpretation. In 'choosing' what to write about, it was only me who made the decision about what I thought was worth knowing about; it is therefore a partial representation of my life.

Writing autobiographically has also meant my voice will not be disguised amongst others, it will be easy for people who know me to recognise me – so I have had to consider carefully how much of my story I want to tell. I reserve the right to be self-governing in a bid to safeguard my own well-being. In writing my auto/biography, I

have been caught between being what I consider to be ethical, and what is represented as truth; I am the gatekeeper to my own story.

Furthermore, writing for the thesis, I have come to understand my class experience 'through a middle-class way of knowing' (Plummer, 2000, p.93), recognising the potential risk of objectifying myself or conforming to deficit models of the working-class women in my auto/biography. Finding my voice as a working-class woman, as someone who has embodied feelings of insecurity and inferiority all her life, has been more difficult than I anticipated. I have worked so hard to construct a public image of independence, strength, and control. I fear that by opening myself up in this work it will make me more susceptible to criticism. I am conscious that people may read this thesis and think that it is not worthy of scholarship, or even worse, think that it is just another bildungsroman, but I am convinced, from my own perspective, that the auto/biographical nature of my exploration has proved to be an effective research approach for revealing how the complex issues of legitimacy and agency continue to impact the formation of self and identity for an individual who has crossed class boundaries.

Originating from a background where anything that I said or did was judged, (you don't let other people know your business), the act of writing about myself has left me exposed, more exposed than if I had written about the lives of others; self-disclosure has proved to be a perilous ask. But for me this story needs to be told, because if I am to facilitate understanding for others, I need to understand myself first.

As I have written, I have caught sight of my past: the opportunities taken or lost, moments of happiness and regret; the process of writing has been therapeutic but, at times, an embarrassing, painful and distressing process. Whilst there are some scenes missing in the account given, due to the vagaries of memory; as I have already acknowledged, there are also some parts of my life more difficult to share because of a desire to protect the other actors in my story. As Zandy states

I have used memory as a lever, a physical force – rough and beautiful – that multiplies our power to act in the world. To be sure it is not a soothing, secure

or easy tool. Memory is unsafe. There is a risk of releasing what others – perhaps our own families – would prefer were kept hidden (Zandy, 1994, p. xi)

I would like to suggest that, in addition to the ethical issues posed by any naturalistic research, the auto/biographical nature of this research has presented me with additional moral and ethical dilemmas.

## **Limitations of the research**

Autobiographical writing does not offer statistical significance, standardised procedures, reliability, replication, and generalisability.

I am only one person, and an obvious objection would be that a sample of one is unrepresentative of experiences of people who are not like me. Nor, do I suggest that this research is representative of all working-class academics or teacher educators. This is precisely why I argue that this research is so important. Academics from the working-class, like me, are a minority group, and most people from minority groups are absent from social research because their members only rarely become researchers: most, but not all, tend not to come from that part of society that is ignored, oppressed or exploited. So while it could be argued that this is a limitation of the research, I suggest that I am presenting a view of what it is to be outside of the dominant group, using a first-hand account of experiences that can only be interpreted and constructed by the person subject to those experiences. It might not be representative of others, but it is honestly representative of one person's real experience. It is a story that is both deeply personal and particular and because of this I think it is relevant when considering social class in the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century neoliberal ideology. It offers both a critique of initial teacher education and a reflection of an educated working-class woman in higher education, from the perspective of 'une miraculée'.

My auto/biographical account is a deeply interpretive act and it goes without saying that it cannot be replicated, (although the research methods I used could), which

places further limits on any claims to reliability and generalisability that I can make. However, I would like to argue that a phenomenological approach enables the reader to understand the experiences at a deeper level; the how and the where of oppressive practices, of an educated woman from the working-class. It is the small things that are often full with meaning, at a micro level.

Another criticism that could be levelled at the research, is that the research data cannot be standardised, and it is self-indulgent and solipsistic. But auto/biographical work can also be strong, powerful and effective (Merrill and West, 2009) presenting details of the mundane everyday practices that underpin the lived experiences of minority groups in society.

A further criticism is that this kind of research is like literature, like all the autobiographies on the shelves in bookshops all over the world: this is not science. Positivists argue that science is concerned with rational explanation, based on facts not fiction, rather than being based on one person's attempt to describe and offer an account of society as it is experienced. However, as Stanley and Wise, 1993) have stated they see 'all research as 'fiction' in the sense that it views and so constructs 'reality' through the eyes of one person, (Stanley and Wise, 1993, p.171).

## Chapter 6: The making of a teacher educator

To understand is first to understand the field with which and against which one has been formed (Bourdieu, 2007, p.4)

There is no denying that ‘the social space we occupy has been historically generated’ (Skeggs, 1997, p.8). I have set out both the socio-political and theoretical contexts of the research which delineate the framework within which I can now tell my story.

In this chapter I confront, for the first time in my life, my experience of growing up in socio-economic deprivation in order to explore how and why my upbringing has had such an enduring effect on who I am today. It constitutes phase one of my research data based on my memories of growing up in poverty, and my subsequent upward social mobility. I offer a layered account (Ronai, 1995), which interweaves my narrative based on my memories and reflections of the lived experience (which are indicated by the use of this font that suggests a manually typewritten script) and my critical analysis (represented in this principal font). I present my auto/biographical data based solely on my interpretation of the events as I remember them now - it would have been fairly unusual for a working-class girl like me to keep a historical record of my life to pass onto future generations – this would have certainly been something outside my cultural norms.

My critical analysis of this chapter draws upon Bourdieu’s theoretical framework as set out in chapter four, but I have also drawn on more contemporary interpretations of his work, for example, Ingram and Abrahams (2016); Reay (2010; 2013); Friedman (2016); and, Field, Merrill and West (2012) to examine the impact of being born ‘working-class’. While Bourdieu has helped me to analyse how the structural and objective aspects of growing up in economic, cultural and social disadvantage has affected the formation of the substantial self, and the impact that this has had, his concepts of habitus, field and capital did not sufficiently address the subjective experience of people like me, who achieve despite the odds in the education system – ‘les miraculés’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). So I have turned to Honneth’s concepts

of recognition and disrespect (1995, 2007), to illuminate how and why I have managed to overcome disadvantage in an iniquitous society to become 'une miraculée' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

The chapter is divided into three episodes of my lifetime experiences, 1) Border crossing, 2) Capital gains and losses, and, 3) Entering the academy. The first section 'Border Crossing' tells the story of my childhood and my early education. Underpinning the story is a story of how the habitus was formed through both familial and educational experiences. It is important to remember that 'Children do not possess an analysis of what is happening to them, or around them' (Steedman, 1986, p.28) so parts of my story are based on stories I can remember being told by my mum and granddad as I was growing up.

## **Border Crossing**

### **Early years**

My story starts in 1963, my mum was just 17 years old when she gave birth to me out of wedlock. I am illegitimate. But like any story of real life events, there is no real beginning and so I have decided to go back a little further to share what was happening in my mum's life at that time, as this is significant in my own story.

My granddad was an orphan. He told the story of being abandoned as an infant, with his brother, on an orphanage doorstep in Ireland. He and his brother grew up in convents. He alleged that the first convent burnt down and his brother died in the fire, so he was left on his own. He said life was hard and the nuns were cruel. He never told any of us any more about the early part of his life. As a young man he stowed away from Ireland to England in the hold of a cargo boat. He settled in the south of England and eventually met my nan. She already



had two children from a previous marriage, and they had two children together: my uncle and my mum, who was the youngest. By this time my grandad was a baker, a bread maker.

As my mum was growing up, the family shared a modern council house around 'a green' in South East London; I assume they were housed as part of Bevan's Housing Act of 1949. I gather from the stories my mum told, that the marriage was not a happy one. The older children left home as soon as they could. When it was just my mum left at home, my grandmother met another man and left my grandad to go to New Zealand. According to my mum, my granddad was broken-hearted. A year after she left, and with no hope of her return, my grandad followed my grandmother to New Zealand hoping to try to regain her affections, leaving my mum, who was 15 years old, to care for herself. There was a strong community in the 'green' so the parents of other young people looked out for her.

My mum told me that although she was an intelligent girl, with no-one in authority to look after her she took to truanting from school because, as she says, she didn't have, or want, anyone to tell her what to do. Whenever my mum spoke about her own school experience later, she expressed either loathing or regret. Left alone, she sought and found what I suspect most adolescent girls at that time were looking for: love. She met my dad, who was five years older than her and already known to the police for a long list of minor offences. He also had another family. By the time my granddad returned home, my mum had left school with no qualifications, was pregnant and alone.

Aside from the fact that she had been left alone to fend for herself and with no-one, especially a mother, to nurture her, the traditional shelter in ruins, I suspect that my mum's expectations were shaped, without someone to regulate her, by expectations of a 'typical girl' in the 1960s (Griffin, 1985) imparted by the behaviour of parents, teachers, employers, and male peers. Getting a boyfriend was seen as proof of grown up femininity (Ibid) and 'heterosexuality, marriage and motherhood, were seen as inevitable 'facts of life' for most young women' (Griffin, 1985, p. 50). I suspect that being 'abandoned' at the age of 15 years would have felt akin to physical injury; this type of disrespect does lasting damage to one's basic confidence, leading to a loss of trust in oneself and the world (Honneth (1995). Was becoming a mother part of my mum's own search for recognition?

I was born in my grandad's house in South East London in 1963. Despite his absence, my mum still had strong affection for my dad, who by then had formed yet another new relationship. Notwithstanding this, my brother followed fewer than two years later. My brother and I were/are bastards, so our home life was unconventional. For the first four years of my life we lived with my grandad. This was no normal house - he sold cigarettes and sweets from the front door which meant there were always people coming and going.

This was a period of low unemployment and relative economic prosperity at a time when the nuclear family form of father in a full-time job and mother as a full-time housewife, with an average of two children was assumed to be the norm.

Because of his own upbringing my grandfather was ill-prepared to support my mum. He was caring and loving but did not undertake any of the parenting. My dad was absent for the whole time, with the exception of an occasional

visit at birthdays and Christmas. My mum, my brother and I lived with my granddad, until I was five years old, when at last we were rehoused.



Me, aged 2½ years on 'the green' (1966)

At this time in history, mothers who had children illegitimately (never married) were considered immoral (Edwards and Caballero, 2011). I think my mum was acutely aware of this and also of how she was socially positioned within this discourse through the value-laden recognition of others. I think my mum was keen to overcome the stigma (Goffman, 1963) of being an unmarried mother and to show the world that 'whatever people say I am, that's what I am not' and that she was respectable (Skeggs, 1997).

My father remains absent in the rest of this narrative, mostly because he did not feature in my life growing up. We stayed in sporadic contact until I was 40 years but then our paths went separate ways, he went to live in Spain and I got married. We still maintain infrequent contact by letter. However, a consequence of having no father figure when I was growing up has meant that I do not 'quite believe in male power' (Steedman, 1986, p. 19) which I feel has had an influence on the lack of feeling of being oppressed because of my sex.

It was and still is a fact that one's life chances are strongly affected by a person's natal class and the inequalities that follow (Sayer, 2005). Families in poverty like mine was, are not like families that are more comfortable and secure. The material base dictates a wealth of moral and emotional patterns. Thus, my habitus de classes, Bourdieu (1984) was formed in the context of low economic, social and cultural capital. As is the case with many families living in socio-economic poverty existential threat happens almost daily. This chapter also presents the first glimpse of familial capital (Field, Merrill and West, 2012), which although not dissimilar to the social capital of the community, in many respects was distinct because of the stable loving relationships in all our lives.

## **Primary School**

My memories of primary school offer a really positive picture of childhood.

By the time I started nursery school, in an area of high socio economic deprivation, (of course I did not know this at the time), my mum had taught me to read, write and spell my name. I remember my nursery school clearly, the playground and the classroom - I loved it. I can remember my friends, the teachers, and I remember learning to count and to read. I can distinctly remember the kindness of everyone on the day when I fell over and cut my knee badly. I am still friends with one of the girls I attended nursery with. Like me, she has also crossed social boundaries, but through marriage.

From nursery school I went on to attend the neighbouring primary school. It was average sized and urban - there was no green space. It was typical of many late 19<sup>th</sup> century school buildings; dark brown corridors, and at its centre a large hall with a polished wooden floor. I can still remember the smell.

Apart from our illegitimacy, my brother and I were no different from most of the other children we attended school with - we were all 'more or less' poor, but I think we were one of only one or two families in which the children were illegitimate - many fathers were absent for other reasons. Most of the children came from the council estate that surrounded the school. However, by this time we had been housed in a council flat 20 minutes' walk from school. This flat was on a major road which meant that we were isolated from the rest of the community in which we grew up.

I have no recollection of feeling disadvantaged compared to other children at that point. We didn't know there was a different way to live. There was no collective class consciousness. We just got on with it. But, I can distinctly remember one hugely political event, the miner's strike and three-day week in 1973, not for any political reason but for lighting candles for light and struggling to keep warm when the power went off.

As Marsden (1973) found in his comprehensive study of 'mothers alone', mothers who had only illegitimate children had the smallest incomes and the poorest living conditions of all other groups of single mothers. He found that mothers, like my mum, were going short of food: and although the children's diets were sufficient during the week when they were having 'free' school meals they were not sufficient at the weekends (Ibid.); this was also the case for us as children. Like many of the families in Marsden's (1973) study, economic deprivation was heightened because of the way National Assistance was paid. This meant there was no spare money for days out or other things that would have improved our cultural capital.

I can remember my mum really struggling to think about how she was going to feed us over the weekend... National

Assistance was paid on a Monday. Although there were lots of us in school in receipt of free school 'dinners', my brother and I also received school grants for school uniform and shoes, because my mum was 'on the social'. This made us hyper-visible, because ironically we were the only children with good 'proper' school shoes. We were taught to look after our shoes and clothes as they were difficult to replace - something that I still do today.

Around about the time I started school, the Plowden Report (1967) was published. This, the first thorough review of primary education since the Hadow Report (1933) was very much a product of its time, full of enthusiasm and optimism. The report's recurring themes were individual learning, flexibility in the curriculum, the use of the environment, learning by discovery, and the importance of the evaluation of children's progress (Plowden 1967, p.202). This is how I remember my school experience. In contrast to the working-class children in Marsden's (1973) study I did well at school.

I was happy, confident and a high achiever. I loved school, loved learning, and adored all of my teachers. From what I can remember the teachers had high expectations for all of us (or was it just me?). There was no in-class grouping by ability and we all did what we could according to our own ability. I remember Janet and John books and learning through projects and enquiry, and having good relationships with my teachers. Furthermore, my experience at primary school provided a sense of intellectual excitement and possibility.

Looking back, my teachers were the most educated, and possibly the most middle-class people we all knew. I always wanted to be a teacher, but did not for a moment think this would ever be possible; nor did anyone think

about telling me how I would go about it. I remember getting interested in things, for example, swimming, Queen Victoria, art, the recorder and then not having the capital, economic and cultural, to follow them through.

I wonder now if there were some early indicators of being afforded love, rights and solidarity (Honneth, 1995) from those teachers who may have recognised the challenges we faced as a family, and were keen to encourage me academically.

However, lurking in the background of my childhood there was always the constant threat of abandonment – when my brother and I were naughty, and in particular when we argued and fought, my mum used to pack a bag, and we would be got ready to be sent to the ‘home for naughty children’.

Bourdieu (1984) suggested the *habitus de classe* was formed when not only economic capital, but also cultural capital, particularly in the form of emotional capital is passed on from the mother to child through a process of parental involvement. Furthermore, Winnicott (1964) argued that to achieve a good sense of self, the child must be raised by a ‘good enough’ mother, a mother who puts the needs of the child before herself, but as Lawler (2000) asserted the mother’s own self must be adequate for the task. My mum was left at a crucial time in her life, and this must have been significant in developing her own sense of self. Thus the production of the ‘good-enough self’ in my family can be traced back generation after generation.

However, I think my mum felt a demand to ‘do it [mother] differently’ to her own mother (Lawler, 2000, p. 84). I am certain that she had a desire to give us what she had not had when growing up. Her sense of responsibility to nurture an autonomous self within my brother and me, placed her under an obligation to ensure that we achieved academically in the face of social inequalities. I know that, in contrast to her own experience of withdrawing herself prematurely from the education system, she

wanted my brother and me to be educated in a desire to give us what she had lacked. So in a bid to show herself as a good mother she placed a great deal of importance on our education.

I do not remember the 11+, and none of us were coached for it, except to say there was a test and some weeks later my mum told me I had passed a test and could go to grammar school. I was one of the top-performing 20 per cent of children. I can remember my mum comparing the outcomes for me with my friends, who although working-class, tended to fall within the traditional structure of 'the family'. I found for the first time that being clever was a way to make my mum pleased with me. She believed that our actions reflected on her – this meant 'being good' and working hard at school.

In their study Jackson and Marsden (1966) found that working-class children who had passed the grammar school selection test were most likely to be: born into small families; only children; children who had attended a primary school dominated by a middle-class catchment; or where parents had connections with the middle-class. Bourdieu (1986) would argue that all of these factors would constitute some form of social or cultural capital. I had none of these advantages but I was still able to achieve academic success – I was indeed 'une miraculée' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). But Jackson and Marsden (1966) also found that the majority of the working-class children in their study, for different reasons and in different ways, had pressure put on them by their parents to do well at school. In this instance education is one of a series of strategies used by families to perpetuate or advance their social position (Bourdieu, 1998). To successfully pass the 11+ afforded me respect from my mum; not only had I raised my own status, but it was also evidence that she, a single mother, was able to make a valid contribution to society (Honneth, 1995). So for me, even at this early stage in my life, working hard at school was informed by a desire for recognition of my capabilities and for gaining recognition and respect (Honneth, 1995). And so the primary habitus (Bourdieu, 1984) was formed fashioned on



economic, social and cultural deprivation, and on feelings of inferiority based on a recognition that we were not the same as other families and a mum struggling to cope with her own sense of self.

## **Secondary school – the stranger within**

The transition to secondary school was problematic. My preferred school (a reputable girls' school which until 1974 had been a grammar school) was oversubscribed so the catchment area was reduced; we lived out of the catchment area. Instead, I was allocated a place at England's first purpose built comprehensive school which by the mid 1970s had the reputation of being 'the school for mothers and babies' because of the high number of teenage pregnancies. So in September of 1975, my friends all went off to their new schools; some to the girls' school that we had chosen, but many others just went to the nearest comprehensive school (also oversubscribed).

I can remember my mum and I having a conversation about the options, and we decided not to attend the school that had been offered and wait for a more suitable school than the one allocated. Unfortunately, I was not offered a place at any school for a period of three months. My primary school provided me with some English and mathematics text books from which to work, and the teachers were a great moral support to my mum too, I remember. This was a lonely time for me - all of my friends were attending their new schools, making new friends, and I became isolated. My brother and I have a very different perspective on this time. He thought we were forming a really close bond as mother and daughter, whereas I was just too afraid to leave her side.

During, this time my mum paid frequent visits to the City Education Offices to try to secure me a place at a school that was more suitable. I think she saw this as a personal challenge against the system.

With thanks to my academic friends, I can now see my mum's actions as an act of resistance to the symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1994) being enacted upon us; in which we, (my mum and me) were being structurally excluded from the possession of certain rights within society. Reay (2000) found that working-class mothers with negative experiences of school, often found it difficult to draw on the emotional capital necessary for their child, if the child was experiencing difficulties. My mum did exactly the opposite which is more consistent with the findings of Connell, Ashenden and Kessler (1982) who found that working-class mothers placed a great deal of importance on education, despite their own negative experiences. Honneth (1995) would argue that 'the feeling of not enjoying the status of a full-fledged partner to interaction equally endowed with moral rights' (Honneth, 1995, p.133) i.e. the feeling of being disrespected was central to my mum's agency. And it was only by 'regaining the possibility of active conduct' (Ibid., p.138) that she was able to dispel the state of emotional tension.

Eventually a school place was found for me at a grammar school six miles away. Not one child from my primary school had attended this school. Despite being in a deprived area largely populated by people of Afro-Caribbean origin, most of the children were either white middle-class, or at least from families of the upper reaches of the working-class.

These families had what Jackson and Marsden (1966) would argue was educational inheritance, in which there was a 'shrewd and trusting' relationship between the school and family.

It was a small school in comparison to the very large comprehensive schools in the area and was very traditional - the girls did domestic science and the boys did woodwork; not one child, parent or teacher questioned this!

With limited social capital and low cultural capital, the first six months at the grammar school were difficult. I had started three months later than everyone else, which meant that my peers had already formed friendship groups, and I was the outsider both socially and culturally. From the outset, I was surrounded by children who were richer, spoke 'better', were more confident, and seemed to 'belong' in the school community. Until I received the maintenance grant for school clothing we did not have the means to pay for the 'proper' school uniform and this made me hyper-visible at a time when I most needed to fit in.

I particularly remember when I started at the school, the children were all talking about the school residential in the summer term - I was excluded because we could not afford to go, but also I had no close friends. I was illegitimate all over again.

In addition to the social, cultural and economic challenges I was facing on a day-to-day basis, I was behind in my academic work too - despite the fact that I had been practising mathematics and English at home with resources given to me by teachers at my old primary school.

I was looked down upon by many of the children for being poor. I remember name-calling about clothes, accent and

ability to pay. My mum could not afford school trips, the 'best' hockey stick, tennis rackets, coats and shoes. I was also a recipient of free school meals, something that I stopped as soon as I could persuade my mum to let me take sandwiches. But then even my sandwiches were different - spam instead of ham; marmite instead of cheese. Nor had I been to a 'grown up' restaurant and I had definitely never been abroad, in fact we had only been on holiday once.

The view of lower social groups being inferior to middle-class children was maintained and displayed by the intolerance of the Senior Mistress, an elderly middle-class spinster, who instantly assumed that I was going to be 'naughty' because I was the child of an unmarried single mother - this was explicitly manifested in her attitude towards me. If ever there was trouble - girls messing around in the playground, corridors and toilets it was always me she admonished first, whether I was involved or not, which more often than not, I was not. I was a good girl, hardworking and keen to please.

**The working-class have been the source of much disappointment and disgust for the middle-class (Lawler, 1999). Furthermore, in Britain, single mothers have been subject to 'othering' and are very often seen as producers of children who are a threat to the social order (Lawler, 2000).**

The first parent consultation evening was dreadful, I can distinctly remember the feelings of shame, embarrassment and inferiority as the Senior Mistress looked my mum up and down and gave a sniff of disdain. This was my first lesson in humiliation - letting us both know that we belonged to the 'wrong class'. She

later went on to call my brother a dirty little guttersnipe!

This teacher saw my mum as the 'other' as someone whose children were a threat to the middle-class field. There was no appreciation of the challenges my mum must have been facing. My mum's repeated sense of abandonment probably meant that her own sense of self was insecure. The humiliation, and insult, would have done nothing to help my mum's self-esteem. Furthermore, this denigration was anchored within the social structure and was symbolic of the social system that pathologised mums like mine. This mismatch between this teacher's values, attitudes and experience and my own family's was clear to see, and was constantly manifested in acts of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1994) over the years.

In retrospect, I now realise that I did not hold the same social, economic and cultural capital as the majority of the children at the school. Even in comparison to other working-class children who came from aspirant, predominantly conservative voting families, I was different. Statistics show that in the 1960s, although working-class pupils made up 26 per cent of grammar school pupils, children from unskilled, manual, working-class backgrounds represented only 0.3 per cent of those who achieved two 'A' levels or more, and only 1 per cent of students from unskilled backgrounds went onto get a degree (Robbins, 1963).

The school's mission was probably to 'educate' us 'the other' so that we denied our working-class values in favour of those of the middle-class (Reay, 2001). I became what Bourdieu (1999) would call an 'outcast[s] on the inside', with a desire for the benefits that increased capital brings, but faced with cultural losses, alienation and subordination. Like the working-class boys in Jackson and Marsden's (1966) study, to survive or to gain recognition I began to assume middle-class values and norms. I did this through academic achievement. But there was still a mismatch between my (primary) habitus and the habitus required in a new field, which resulted in hysteresis in which my 'practices are always liable to incur negative sanctions when the environment with which they are objectively confronted is too distant from that in which they are objectively fitted' (Bourdieu, 1977, p.78)

This teacher was also an English teacher and on more than one occasion I remember being shamed in public for reading the 'wrong' books, (I was an avid fan of Enid Blyton's Secret Seven and Famous Five stories, which of course I now realise were terribly middle-class!).

Reay (2001) suggested that contemporary educational systems in the UK retain remnants of these past elite prejudices in which the system was designed to control the lower classes and, as a consequence, all authority remains vested in a middle-class educational system which ascribes to middle-class rather than working-class cultural capital.

Honneth (1995) points out how feelings of shame lower a person's feelings of self-worth. From that moment, I realised that the assumptions that middle-class children and adults held about the working-class carried consequences. Indeed, these messages had a huge impact on me, but rather than allowing myself to become oppressed by feelings of low self-esteem, it became the motivational impetus for a struggle for recognition (Honneth, 1995, p.138).

Of course I still had working-class friends from primary school, but they did not have the long journey home and as much homework as I did, so our shared time was at weekends only. Furthermore, because there was a very strict uniform code at my school compared to the local comprehensive schools I was marked out in my local community as attending a 'posh' school. So I had two lives: the grammar school life and a home life at weekends. This was very different from most of my peers whose lives were dominated by only one set of cultural and social values.

Bourdieu (2007) argued that the hysteresis experienced by the upwardly mobile had psychic implications which could produce a painfully fragmented self, a *habitus clivé*,

and the 'product of such a contradictory injunction is doomed to be ambivalent about himself (*sic*) . . . to produce a habitus divided against itself, and doomed to a kind of double perception of self, to successive allegiances and multiple identities' (Bourdieu, 1999, p.511)

During this first year I suffered what I now recognise as an episode of childhood depression. Every morning and every evening I would cry and beg my mum not to send me to school, even though I always did go in the end. Eventually I was referred to the children's mental health services and received counselling. My mum did not cope well with this situation. I suspect I was suffering from isolation and a loss of identity. My relationship with my mum changed at that point - instead of being a 'good enough' daughter, I became emotionally demanding and problematic.

Like many children in difficult family settings, I felt responsible for the burden I was placing on my mum (Steedman, 1986; Miller, 1987; West, 1996) which made me feel worthless as a result; these feelings have pervaded throughout my adult life. Honneth (1995) contended that whereas relationships of love and friendship facilitate the development of self-confidence, the denial of these in the form of exclusion, insult and shame can be seen as violating self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. As a child in a new field, I was trying to negotiate a difficult balance between investing in a new identity and holding on to a cohesive self that was being denied by those in power, including my mum. I was struggling to express needs and desires but with a fear of being abandoned. It was a period in my life when I probably needed most recognition, yet I had the least.

But by the end of the first academic year I found friendship with the daughter of a Baptist Minister and a primary school teacher who introduced me to her network of friends. I can distinctly remember going to her house

and feeling completely socially inept in a very, what I now recognise as what Jackson and Marsden (1966) would call 'established middle-class' setting. The thing I remember most was having pudding after tea.

She was (and still is) a caring and loving individual who recognised the reciprocal nature of legal rights (Honneth, 1995). She showed me love, and through her love I gained self-confidence. She included me in her friendship group and her family, and through moral respect and recognition of the other, I found a sense of belonging and began to recognise my own autonomy and agency (Honneth, 1995).

In my second year I settled; I found a sense of belonging in a secure set of friends who were in the 'set' below the 'coolest' group. We learned, and we had a good friendship, despite differences in our socio-economic backgrounds. Aside from a few minor run-ins with teacher authority, in the main I was a 'good girl' and the rest of my school life passed by fairly uneventfully, in fact I don't remember many details about it beyond the normal trials and tribulations of a teenager: studying, friends, boys, etc. I was academic and studied hard and was popular with most of my teachers. I do remember that I did not engage with any extra-curricular activities like music or sport as they all involved not only a financial cost, but were also constrained by the long journey home. Even finding money for cookery caused a huge amount of tension in my house, so I went to work in a pet shop at weekends which enabled me to fund my own activities and buy clothes. I remember feeling a sense of unfairness when I compared my experiences with my peers. This was also the year that my brother started school.



Whilst my mum was battling with the education authorities over my transition to secondary school, she was also dealing with a situation presented by my brother who was facing challenges at school. He was the oldest in the year group, very able and not challenged, so was very naughty. My mum fought for him to be accelerated to the next year group up, which the school did - but issues arose at transition, just one year later.

It is clear to me that in a bid to transform the habitus and not to reiterate her own learning experiences, my mother placed a great deal of importance on my/our education. Despite my mother's own lack of a role model to support her educational development, this did not deter her from intervening in our (both my brother and me) educational course. My mum always supported the school with regards to our education; she encouraged us to engage with school activities such as homework, attended parent consultations and supported teachers' decisions. So rather than replicating her own habitus, she was attempting 'the transformation of the habitus' (Bourdieu, 1993, p.87) through being actively involved in our education, ensuring that we were successful at school despite the negative feelings of her own experiences. As Pilling (1990, cited in Lucey, Melody and Walkerdine, 2003) suggested, working-class parents' desires and dreams of a better life for their children act as a powerful engine which drives their positive motivation towards education.

In 1979, as I was studying for the general Certificate in Education (GCE), Margaret Thatcher was elected as Prime Minister. I can remember my mum being excited that a woman had been elected. Without being openly feminist, my mum always encouraged me to think that girls were equal to boys, and without a father in the house I was never really aware of the power men could wield. Looking back now I wonder if this was where my mum's sense of agency came from.

This was also the year my granddad died suddenly of lung disease - he was only 62. This was a very difficult time for us all, as we were close - he used to visit us every day. I can remember the sound of his car pulling up and our dog becoming very excited. He would stay for an hour or so and have a cup of tea. This was part of our daily routine for years. We were always pleased to see him. My brother and I would stay at his house on Saturday nights. Together we would watch westerns and the Generation Game and eat beef burgers and 'Wagon Wheels'. My mum took his death particularly badly - she had been abandoned again, not only by her dad but also by her partner who had decided to leave her, again, at a time when she most needed him. As a consequence, she absented herself from family life through depression and use of alcohol.

This was a period of great volatility, emotionally, mentally and physically, which was fueled by my mum's complex and unstable relationship with the man she was later to marry. Alcohol featured heavily; there were inter-family rows, assaults - physical and verbal, smashed-in windows and police visits. Just like her, at the age of 13 and 15 respectively, although our basic needs were met, my brother and I were left pretty much to our own devices. My brother and I reacted differently; he started to hang out with his friends on the streets 'doing nothing and getting into trouble' (Corrigan, 1979) and I turned to academic study. My room with my school books became a safe space.

The thread running through the early story is abandonment. My grandad abandoned by his parents, then his wife. My mum abandoned by her mum, my grandad, then my dad, and even her partner; and finally my mum's forced abandonment of my brother and me through bereavement and loss. However, by now I was developing a

psychological capital (Field, Merrill and West, 2012), I was both vulnerable and strong. Despite enduring very challenging circumstances since my transition to secondary school, I was successful at school: 'une miraculée'.

A year later, in 1980, I sat eight GCE 'O' Levels and passed them with good grades. By this time my mum and her partner, after a failed business attempt, had made a decision to withdraw from the employment market, choosing instead to claim benefits.

As Bourdieu (1984) argued, the habitus can be transformed through a process that either raises or lowers an individual's expectations (Bourdieu, 1994). So in the field of compulsory education, despite being equipped with a working-class habitus, based on little social and cultural capital, I managed to acquire enough middle-class habitus necessary for successful academic study, despite being treated as inferior, invisible and being denied resources (Bourdieu, 1994), or being subjected to what Bourdieu refers to as symbolic violence or 'censored and euphemized violence' (1994, p.216-17).

After my GCEs, I decided to return to school to do three A Levels, although thoughts of going to university had never entered my head, nor had there been any discussion about it. Like many of the working-class boys in Jackson and Marsden's (1966) seminal study I did not stay on to complete my A levels. By November I had left school and got a job.

Goldthorpe (1996), Reay, *et al.* (2005) and most recently Finnegan (2017), argue that educational decision-making remains conditioned by the class situation in which it takes place, and the collective patterns of working-class trajectories within education remain sharply different from those of the middle-class, regardless of what individual working-class students are able to negotiate and achieve for themselves. Bourdieu (1994) would argue that this arises because the dispositions, which make up the

primary habitus, are the products of opportunities and constraints framing the individual's earlier life experiences. As I had no experience of higher education, nor any social capital to draw on and knew no-one who had been to university; even if I had achieved 'A' Levels I would not have considered going to university, as it had not even entered my consciousness as someone raised without inherited educational capital. As Griffin (1985) pointed out, I failed to see how education could provide an alternative life-style to the one that I thought was pre-destined. I had the educational capital but no idea how to use it.

As Bruner (2004) proposed 'We constantly construct and reconstruct a self to meet the needs of the situations we encounter and do so with the guidance of the memories of the past, and hopes and fears for the future' (Bruner, 2004, p.210).

I know that finances were restricted at home as neither my mum nor her partner were working. So the driving force for this decision may have been driven by a determination not to be a financial burden. But I think unconsciously I may have realised that I could not continue to earn recognition from my mum through being 'clever'; it no longer mattered to her, and as such no longer mattered to me.

As children, we learn our place in the social order from our immediate environment (Plummer, 2000). Our place in society is defined by other people who impose on us definitions and values relating to class, gender, race. These roles are internalised and become part of our perception of ourselves (Plummer, 2000) - our habitus (Bourdieu, 1994). My mum's love was conditional upon me being a clever girl. My desire to please my mum is apparent in the early accounts of my childhood. I had learnt early on in my life that I was a burden, expensive and lucky to be looked after, so I sought recognition in the form of love and rights (Honneth, 1995). As I finished my education our relationship became unstable.

It seems that the source of my class transition stemmed from this stigmatisation of my mum as a single mother, and her desire to be seen as respectable. Every mother carries with her a bit of her 'unmastered past', which she unconsciously hands on to her child (Miller, 1987), but if the mother recognises that her own needs are not met, she may unconsciously try to assuage her own needs through her child. When we were young, my mum had to work on herself, and us, continuously, to live up to the criteria of a good mother. The notion of the good mother was framed by class relations in which working-class women sought to prove themselves as adequate to the standards of the middle-class 'other' (Skeggs, 1997).

## **Capital gains..... and losses**

Whilst I never had a conscious desire to leave the working-class existence, 'to get out and get away' (Lawler, 1999), since leaving school I found myself constantly in a position where I was amongst the middle-class, a place bought with academic capital. Whilst policy perspectives present mobility as an unambiguously progressive force, it has a big impact on social, familial relationships, as well as the 'ontological coherence of the self' (Friedman, 2016, p.130), as will be seen below.

In this section I chart the years between leaving school and starting work at the university. It tells a story of capital gains and losses through a chosen selection of significant events.

### **Office work: A good job for a girl?**

It was 1980, nine days before my 17th birthday. I had done what lots of educated young women did when they left school at that time, I went to work in a bank. The bank was a branch of a large international bank in the West End of London. There were about 100 members of staff from all over London and the surrounding suburbs. The

staff population was mostly white middle-class men and women, there were a few members of staff, male and female, from black and minority ethnic groups. I can remember it was mostly men that held management positions, the women assuming clerical roles, including the typing pool and face-to-face interaction with customers. I worked in the department for processing cheques. I was the youngest employee and the least well educated (the other new entrants all had 'A' Levels at least), and of course started at the bottom. In my office, a back office with no natural light, there were banks of computers to process daily transactions, each occupied by experienced operators, all women who were trained. Much of the low level work carried out by us, new entrants, involved manually sorting cheques; the work was routine and boring. My aim was to be a foreign exchange cashier; this was where all the grown up women worked. We, my younger female peers and I, called them the 'Big Matures' because they talked about engagements, marriage, and diets. They were our role models.

To set the scene, it is important to remember that it is only five years after the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and The Equal Opportunities Commission came into effect. At this time office jobs provided the first full-time employment for many young working-class women. It was a predominantly female occupation with women concentrated in the lower status, poorly paid secretarial and clerical jobs. Working in a bank at that time offered young working-class women the promise of promotion, but in reality provided a mere illusion of upward mobility because so few women ever reached the higher levels of office hierarchy (Griffin, 1985). It was also a time of huge political change, the beginning of the Thatcher era (1979-1990) which represented a systematic, decisive rejection and reversal of the post-war consensus, instead opting for an emphasis on free markets and restrained government spending. Unemployment increased while benefits were cut; welfare and full employment were

condemned by the Conservative government as obstacles to economic growth. Furthermore, this era presented an assault on working-class Britain through the attack on industry and trade unions - working-class identity itself was under fire (Jones, 2012). Economic inequality, in favour of the rich, grew rapidly; unemployment increased particularly in traditional working-class sectors.

Working in a bank was seen as 'one of the most secure and prestigious jobs for a young working-class woman, offering a chance of training and promotion' (Griffin, 1985, p. 119); it also 'offer[ed] young working-class women the chance to meet eligible men in high status white collar jobs (Ibid., p. 189). Griffin (1985) illustrated the importance of social and economic pressures for young women to get a man, particularly young working-class women, defining heterosexuality as the norm for both men and women.

My early work life was pretty uneventful, the usual issues around going to work in London which involved new roles, new friends and new responsibilities. There were lots of young people, male and female, and we had a great time socialising. I can remember the 'boys' calling for us 'girls' to join them for a drink, as they left work. There was a core group of about six people who would socialise most evenings after work and at weekends. We came from a range of working-class and middle-class families from around the London area. I remember the Falklands' War as a pivotal point in history, and the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana but none of us were politically motivated. I was good at my job, and I made good progress in the four years I was there, and finally made it to foreign exchange cashier. I was proud to be working, to be earning my own money, making my own way in the world. But unlike many of the stories of the working-class there was no celebration of a collective working-class voice in the financial sector, it was all about meritocracy.

I certainly don't remember my working-class habitus being an issue, except maybe on one occasion during a performance management conversation with my 'very' middle-class manager, in which she pointed out that I was not deferring to her seniority and I should have more respect for her. I had no idea what I had done but I can only think that I was not playing by the rules of the game (Bourdieu 1984, p.101).

I then applied for and got a job as a foreign exchange cashier for a large American bank in the heart of the West End of London. I needed a mortgage so I could leave home. Once again I was working with a mixture of working-class and middle-class people and the younger members of staff had a good social life.

My home life was pretty chaotic, my mum and her husband were 'bucking the system' so the household was poor - my brother and I contributed to the household through paying rent, but there were frequent arguments about money, amongst other things. When the relationship was good, my mum and I were very close, but there were long periods when my mum, and her husband, exiled me (and on occasion my brother), threatening to throw us out of the house, or not speaking to us for weeks at a time.

At the age of 21 years I was old enough to apply for a staff mortgage, so I bought my first flat. This gave me greater independence and exposed me less to the vagaries of my mum's approval and affection. However, my relationship with my boyfriend was unstable which left me with huge feelings of insecurity and worthlessness. Although there was no physical violence towards me, the psychological and emotional effects of both of these relationships had a big impact on my feelings of self-esteem and self-worth.



By 1987, I found myself working as a payroll supervisor within the same institution, but in the familiar territory of South East London, as it was considered 'back-office work, so was not located in the more prestigious West End. Here, there were many more people who were working-class, as most were local to the area which was socially, economically and ethnically diverse. I didn't realise why at the time but the habitus of the people I worked with was closer to my own and I met a group of women to whom I could relate.

This was a time in my working career that I felt most at home. As a social agent I had gravitated towards the social field (and positions within those social fields) that best matched my own dispositions (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

My relationship broke down for the final time. I had no cultural capital upon which to draw at this point to protect myself. My time was spent either working or socialising. My relationship with my mum and her husband was tenuous and periods of estrangement became more frequent. I was lost - I had no ambition or motivation to do anything to get myself out of this situation.

But my life changed..... my line manager, during my annual appraisal, asked me my ambition - the first person to do this so far in my career. I told him that I wanted to work in personnel management. At that point he rather bluntly told me that I should stop wasting my time and I should go off and get myself a qualification.

The conversation with my manager surprised me - this was the first time that someone had shown 'love', not in a sexual way, but in a way that Honneth (1995) would describe as the sort of love that makes a person feel legitimised. Looking back,

this conversation is what Tripp would call 'a war story' (2012, p.98). The conversation had a significant impact on me (although I did not realise it at the time – it was to be life-changing) because it went beyond a typical managerial conversation, as it showed a care and concern that made me feel that I was deserving of a better way of being in the world. This was a turning point in my life; an interactional moment that left an indelible mark which altered the fundamental structure of my life (Denzin, 2014). As Denzin (Ibid.) argued, these experiences can only be given meaning retrospectively, as they are relived, so it is only now that I can see what a turning point in my life this was.

To gain access to any personnel management qualification I knew I had to get more qualifications. The first thing I did was to attend evening classes to gain an 'A' level in Sociology. I was the oldest person in our small group of six, and this was the first time I had been introduced to sociological theories about class, gender etc. It was the best thing I had done in my life so far. It opened up new ways of thinking; in particular, raising my awareness of the disproportionate allocation of opportunities and constraints in society, based on gender, race and class. It was a very gentle introduction to critical theory that has stayed with me throughout my lifetime. It also helped me to put my own life in context; it was the first time that I realised that the struggles in my life were not all solely of my own making, but were structural.

During this time, I secured a position in the same bank in the training department as an administrator. My main responsibility was to facilitate the training programme for Oxford and Cambridge graduate entrants. Of course most came from very privileged families. Organising events for the group introduced me to 'high culture'. I

was responsible for booking and facilitating training events in high quality hotels and venues. I was introduced to fine dining and was able to attend cultural events like opera and ballet for the first time. The graduates liked and respected me, I was good at my job, but the social divide was unmistakable. Based on the comments I heard, there was an assumption that I was uneducated (which of course was true) and feelings of inferiority crept in, I felt everything about me screamed poverty and illegitimacy: my clothes, my accent, my lack of education my appreciation, or lack of it, of high culture and fine dining. I was silenced through my lack of higher education, my accent and my lack of cultural and social knowledge. For the first time in my life I found myself truly resentful of class privilege. However, I still have the 'Liberty' scarf they bought for me nearly 30 years on. It must have cost a fortune it was probably the most expensive thing I owned, except for my house and my car!

A powerful aspect of class oppression is the negation of the intelligence of working-class people (Morley, 1997). Negative stereotyping can contribute to the misrecognition of academic abilities; it was not intentional or malicious – we all recognised the 'other'. This proved to be a critical stage of my class transition. I recognised that there was amongst this group of people, who had grown up in privilege, a sense of entitlement to the opportunities presented to them; this was the first time that I had ever witnessed a sense of self-esteem in which there was a mutual recognition that was legitimised within a community (Honneth, 1995).

By this time, I was entering a new relationship with a man who was working-class. I remember a colleague, a friend, with whom I worked talking to me about my partner as potentially holding me back in my career because he

was 'working-class' and would not be able to mix on a social level at work events. Unfortunately, she was right and the relationship ended when he hit me.

I was straddling two worlds: by day I was working in a predominantly middle-class environment and outside work my life was definitely focused on working-class values. This was a period of class separation – at work I was mixing with this group of highly educated, very wealthy young people. I would then go home to a typical working-class environment.

What makes it particularly poignant was that it was also the period of heightened political tension in which there was soaring inflation, a massive increase in unemployment and the introduction of a form of poll tax. Although I didn't realise it, it was at this point that I held a distinctive social space in my life.

Again, I was experiencing a *habitus clivé*, a divided habitus, a sense of self 'torn by contradiction and internal division' (Bourdieu, 2000, p.16). Although relatively under-explored in Bourdieu's work, Ingram and Abrahams' (2016) model ([described in chapter four](#)) provides a useful typology to enable me to reflect on and explain the feelings I was experiencing at that time. According to Ingram and Abrahams (2016) my habitus at this time was destabilised. I was trying to incorporate the structuring forces of each field, my ordinary habitus and my secondary field. On a daily basis I was oscillating between the two positions which brought with it internalised conflict. I wanted the things these people had – they were the same age as me, but at the same time I had very little capital, which I recognised was holding me back. But as Ingram and Abrahams (2016) suggested this destabilised habitus became a source of agency.

I went on to study a Post Graduate Diploma in Personnel Management on a part-time programme. I wonder now how I

was accepted for this programme in light of the fact that I did not have a degree. I met some really interesting people on the course, including a Major of the British Army, an executive for ITV and a lady working for a large retail outlet. We formed a close friendship despite the fact that we came from different class backgrounds. My favourite modules were about employee relations, but in the case studies I always identified with the unions instead of the management.

## **Jam and Jerusalem**

Three years later, having passed my Post Graduate Certificate in Personnel Management, I secured a post at a Local Authority as a Personnel and Training Officer. Once again I felt that I did not fit in. I was working with lots of middle-class women, a group that technically I was now part of, but I felt marginalised and excluded – I did not share the same cultural tastes or the same judgements about the 'other'. Although the job held great promise, the role was futile. I was acutely aware that I was organising training and development events for social workers, who were earning much less than I was as a glorified administrator and who were assuming a great responsibility for vulnerable children and young adults in society – it was neither morally or ethically just. So for the second time in my life I demonstrated agency. I gave my notice in and worked a short period of notice.

My resignation was the first, consciously classed-based agentic, decision I had ever made in my life. Looking back, I suspect I was, unconsciously or indeed

consciously, contesting hegemonic practices of a neoliberal society, which values systems over people.

I have referred already to the *habitus clivé*, the feeling of the acute discomfort of a *habitus* split between two worlds. Studies by Jackson and Marsden (1966) in the UK, and Sennett and Cobb in the US (1977) further support the idea that the upwardly mobile frequently experience problems of isolation, vulnerability and mental disorder. Like the white, working-class women in Skeggs' (1997) study, whilst I recognised that I was middle-class in this setting, I knew that I did not want to take on 'the whole package of dispositions' associated with middle-classness (Skeggs, 1997, p.95). Although I had obviously acquired some capital, I had not inherited these capitals, but had instead 'bought' them through education. As such I could not fully occupy what Bourdieu calls the 'second sense' or 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1977). I had no desire to belong; no desire for attachment to this group of people this way of being (Quinn, 2010). I wasn't interested in material possessions or the social system and my sense of injustice and recognition of inequality was getting stronger.

I had no idea what I was going to do with my life. By this time, I was living in my own house, purchased with a bank staff mortgage whilst working for the bank, but now with exceptionally high interest rates. My mum and her partner, who were both unemployed and claiming benefits, encouraged me ideologically insofar that I was 'bucking the system', like them. Once again I became 'one of us', but they could not, nor indeed would not, have helped financially. I applied for a number of completely inappropriate jobs, including ironically school-based teacher training. One of my friends suggested I did a degree.

## Degrees of choice<sup>8</sup>

I didn't really choose the university - I had no choice, it had to be somewhere close to where I was living for two reasons: firstly, I could not afford to sell up and move house, and secondly, I did not have the confidence to move out of the area in which I had lived all my life. I had no idea what course to apply for or how to apply. Looking back, I think I was lucky that I had resigned in July, and was available at the beginning of September when the universities were still recruiting. I just turned up to my 'local' university, a post 1992 University and asked to talk to someone from social sciences. Within an afternoon I had had an interview, and by the time I left the building that afternoon I had been offered a place on the BSc. Psychology.

I was what Ball, Reay and David (2003) would call a contingent chooser; my choices were limited by geography, finance and familial expectations. I had a mortgage and only limited funds to support myself, so it had to be local. Even if I had had the choice, I would not have chosen to go to a traditional 'Russell Group' university as I would not have felt that I would have fitted in; I did not have the right sort of capital. Bourdieu (1984) wrote about a sense of place; of 'one's relationship to the world and one's proper place within it' (Bourdieu, 1984, p.474). Reay, David and Ball (2005) suggested that 'there is a process of class-matching which goes on between student and university; a synchronisation of familial and institutional habitus' (2005, p.92). It is also a fairly typical scenario in which 'non-traditional' entrants to higher education are concentrated in post-1992 new universities (Burke, 2008)

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<sup>8</sup> Adopted from the text Degrees of Choice by Reay, David and Ball (2005) in which they discuss why students chose their university.

Back in 1993, students did not have to pay tuition fees and I was eligible for a means tested grant of £2,265 and was able to apply for a loan of £420 but I still needed to hold down three low paid part-time jobs to support myself. I rented out a room in my house, I worked as a cleaner, as a retail assistant, and in a leisure centre as a receptionist. Juggling university work, and paid work was challenging to say the least.

Again this is common. Reay, David and Ball (2005) found that far more working-class than middle-class students were undertaking paid employment in both term time and during the holidays. Like me, for many students in the study, it was not a matter of choice, or even to afford luxuries - it was a matter of necessity: 'it was either poverty or failure' (Rick, in Reay, David and Ball, 2005, p.89).

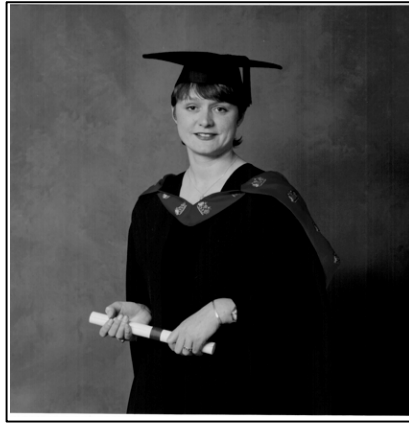
I was different from many of the undergraduates on the course, most were 18 or 19 years of age and many were middle-class. I can distinctly remember observing and envying how many of these young people led their lives, hearing them moan about being broke and then asking parents for extra cash. I had no one to turn to for money. I remember I was also struck by how much I didn't know, how much I hadn't read, how ignorant I was about academia.

Evidence shows that first-generation students are more likely to be from low-income households (Gardner and Holley, 2011). In 1993 when I entered university only 11 per cent of people from unskilled background participated in higher education compared to 73 per cent of professional classes (Sutton Trust, 2008). Widening participation was not to become a key policy agenda until 1997. I had no idea that as a non-traditional, mature, first generation student to attend university, the odds were already stacked against me. Reay (2001) points out that regardless of what individual working-class males and females are able to negotiate and achieve for themselves



within the educational field, the collective patterns of working-class trajectories within education remain sharply different from those of the middle-class.

I had to assimilate myself in to a culture that was completely alien: not only was I older and had more life experience than many of the students, my class origins were different. Cultural capital, or lack of, also had a direct impact on my academic achievements. I remember the first essay I wrote at university. I worked so hard on it, but I had no idea what was expected of me, what was 'acceptable' academic language or what sources were 'legitimate'. I made good friends with a young lady who was also a 'first generation' university student. Despite being not even twenty years old she was very political... her father had been heavily involved in the 'Wapping Disputes' in 1986 and mother worked as an administrator for the Labour Party. We became good friends (she has since gone on to be a clinical psychologist) because we shared sense of inequality and social justice. We became 'political' and attended a number of student demonstrations. She also introduced me to Dostoyevsky, and to texts about socialism; to this day the Ragged Trousered Philanthropist is one of my favourite books. The cast of hypocritical Christians, exploitative capitalists and corrupt councilors provide a backdrop for Tressell's main focus - the workers who think that a better life 'is not for the likes of us'. This was my world written in fiction.



2:1 Degree Psychology. (1996)

Notwithstanding the fact that first generation students are less likely to persist through to degree completion compared with their continuing-generation counterparts (Davis, 2010) and are likely to 'take longer to complete their bachelor's degree compared with their peers' (Gardner and Holley, 2011, p.77), I completed my degree successfully with a 2:1 classification. Like many non-traditional university students attaining a degree was the first step to a 'different' type of future. Sadly, my mum did not attend my graduation.

### **New Labour, new Career**

Despite spending three years at University, when I started the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) I felt that I still did not inhabit the world in which most PGCE students inhabited. I remember the cohort of students seemed to form three distinct groups based on social class and/or age: middle-class middle-aged women, returning to university after raising their children; young middle-class students; and a mixed group of working-class people - most non-traditional entrants. Of course these groups formed out of the common challenges facing them, but it was interesting to note that the working-class group were more heterogeneous in terms of age and background but still came together because of a

class consciousness. I had a crisis of identity, and a crisis of epistemology. This led to another bout of depression. I could not form any attachments to the people that I was spending time with on a day to day basis. I felt incongruent. Despite this I continued my PGCE through a fog of anti-depressants.

My goal was to just get through the course. Like many of today's student teachers I failed to make the connections between theory and practice and treated the two parts of the programme as though they were discrete, using neither one to support the other. What a waste!

Thankfully, by the end of my PGCE I had the support of my future (now) husband so I was able to give up my part-time work, but we existed on very little income. He was trying to find his way in a very small start-up IT company. I was a reluctant student, but I was a very good classroom practitioner and passed my PGCE with success.

At this time my mum was supportive and I know was proud of me, and glad that I was doing well. However, succeeding in my educational aspiration had unanticipated consequences. My experiences had exposed me to a different way of life; a different place in the social structure; a middle-class milieu. Furthermore, my husband-to-be, whilst not a university graduate came from a more middle-class upbringing. This also introduced me to a new set of values, beliefs and language patterns - not all necessarily agreeable to my mum. I think my mum saw me as abandoning my family origins.

As Reay, David and Ball (2005) argue, working-class university students negotiate a difficult balance between investing in a new identity and holding onto a cohesive self that retains an attachment to what has gone before. Again, the spectre of the *habitus clivé* loomed large. The disjuncture between the primary *habitus* and the secondary *habitus*, and the feelings of authenticity in both settings, were an additional dilemma. By now I was experiencing a divergent *habitus clivé* in which I felt on the outside of both fields - what Ingram and Abrahams (2016) would call a destabilised *habitus*. I was oscillating between both the originating and secondary *habitus*, at once rooted in my past but also trying to fit in to the new field and in neither context being authentic to my 'self'. I appropriate Leary's (2003) sociological definition of the 'authentic self' which contends that behaving authentically means operating in a way in which 'adequate acceptance can be attained by being oneself' (2003, p. 53). This is also a concept that, from a psychoanalytic approach Winnicott (1965) explored. He argued that the true self is a theoretical position from which comes spontaneous gesture and personal idea, and because humans are able to self-reflect they often behave inconsistently with their natural inclinations in a belief that this will bring belongingness or acceptance, rather than disapproval, rejection or punishment, if they were to act authentically or in accordance with their true self.

In both settings I was never my 'authentic self' so was a constant source of disappointment not only to my mum, but also to myself.

In 1997, I began teaching in what I hoped would be the golden age of education. In May 1997 Tony Blair had been elected Labour Prime Minister, after 18 years of Conservative Government. I was on my final teaching practice. I remember the feeling of hope when I heard Tony's Blair's pre-election speech at the Blackpool Conference in 1997 'Ask me my three main priorities for government and I tell you: education, education and education'

I found myself, a Newly Qualified Teacher (NQT), in a large junior school. The children were, by and large from white middle-class professional or 'white collar' working-class families. I loved the children and I found it difficult to think of the children as 'products' that needed to show 'value-added' progress. While of course it was important to me that children learned, it was more important that children felt safe and developed a sense of curiosity in the world about them.

When I qualified as a teacher I entered a middle-class, essentially female profession and realised that I was at once both alike and unlike other teachers. Whilst of course I could identify with colleagues because of my gender, I realised quickly that my attitudes and beliefs based on my working-class habitus were different from some of the other teachers. Yet again, without really recognising it my background defined my work as a teacher.

For the first time in my working life I felt a sense of purpose and a sense of recognition. I found love from the pupils I taught and their parents, I developed a positive image of my abilities and became more self-confident (Honneth, 1995) in my ability to be a good teacher. My ways of knowing and being, as a teacher and as an individual had taken hold of the hold of the soul and I saw in myself a transformation (Dall'Alba and Barnacle, 2007). I was no longer depressed and felt a sense of purpose and belonging.

However, as I sat in staff meetings I could hear references being made to those families from socio and economically deprived background and it dawned on me that these teachers could very well have been talking about my mum, our upbringing. I felt very uncomfortable about how some of the schools' parents were being characterised but I did not have the courage to speak up

as, at that time, I was trying to dis-identify and dissimulate from my originary social position in a bid to blend in with the middle-class environment. But, I was constantly challenging colleagues who were 'writing off' particular groups of children because they would not make the school look better in the league tables, or who were difficult to manage.

Skeggs (1997) describes a 'dis-identification and dissimulation' of women in their attempts not to be recognised as working-class and their struggles to assume the imagined symbolic codes of the middle-class. I desperately wanted to assimilate myself into middle-class culture, but did not want to identify with middle-class ideology completely because I recognised the power against 'my own class' they exercised.

Over the course of my career I worked in three schools, all different, as one would expect, and all with children from different socio-economic circumstances. I particularly enjoyed working with children who were being raised in more challenging circumstances - not just those from socio-economic disadvantage, but also those who struggled with learning and /or behaviour. As I taught, I constantly challenged the notion of new initiatives... how would this work with my class... or how would this work with child x or y. I didn't realise at the time that this was critically reflective practice. Often it made my life particularly difficult, I disrupted the smooth introduction of interventions or policy as I challenged taken-for-granted assumptions or hegemonic practices. Sometimes this made me unpopular with the Headteachers with whom I worked, and even the rest of the staff team who just wanted to get on with the job!

I also gained self-respect as I became aware that parents and colleagues had respect for me as a good teacher; this gave me the confidence to justify my decisions about how to realise my own life plans (Honneth, 1995). As Honneth (1995) suggested, recognition, founded on networks of solidarity and shared values, occurs when individual abilities and traits are recognised as being of genuine use in maintaining and developing the structures within an appropriate community. These can then become honoured and celebrated, which in turn leads to loyalty and solidarity (Honneth, Ibid). My mum was also proud of my professional status. So, at this time, both sides of my habitus were reconciled and I was happily navigating both fields (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016).

Within the first few years of teaching, I became responsible for curriculum leadership. In a bid to support my professional ability to negotiate difficult situations or in a bid to silence the voice of dissent the Headteacher suggested I attend the Certificate in Education Management programme. I entered another new field that was both professional and academic. For me this provided an opportunity for a new way of thinking. This provided a safe space for critical thinking - to talk about professional issues away from the setting, the immediacy of practice or stifled by government ideology. This programme enabled me to raise questions about my epistemological beliefs, and whilst I recognised that for some problems there were no solutions, it did help me to reconcile my beliefs with my practices. The changes in my practice were not dramatic, but I became more convinced about what was good teaching and learning. And sometimes my own beliefs were challenged which would lead to feelings of doubt and insecurity. I completed the Certificate and was invited to proceed on to the 'Masters' Programme. I was delighted to be offered this opportunity but afraid

because I did not think I was clever enough. However, gaining my MA coincided with a new Headteacher, a technical rationalist, who transformed the school from a caring community to one in which it was all about top-show and data, she seemed to forget that children were children and turned her back on the teaching staff's requests for help with individual children who were struggling within the system. Within one year I had left the profession.

Despite the enduring feelings of inadequacy, I did complete my MA in Education. For my final dissertation I examined how teachers can and should promote political literacy in primary school: it proved to be another significant turning point in my career.

The MA 'process' enabled me to examine the contested space that is education and to understand 'how considerations of power undergird and frame educational processes and actions' (Brookfield (1995, p.8). Having an MA gave me confidence and a sense of agency; it has enabled me to start to believe in myself as an intellectual rather than a technician, and it empowered me to have an informed opinion. It also enabled me to see the true power of education that has informed my pedagogy as a teacher educator. This was the beginning of my becoming aware of the symbolic power I could hold as someone in a middle-class profession.

### **An agent of the state**

When I left teaching I secured a position as a Primary Consultant within the Local Education Authority. Within weeks I knew this was not the role for me. As consultants we were told what to say, who to say it to, and when to say it, in line with Government policy. I was an agent of the state. Some staff were so overworked, and others



had no work at all. I was lucky I had just enough, but the role was limited and limiting. There was no autonomy: schools that needed /asked for help were denied support whilst others who didn't want it had external provision heaped on them. The inequity of it all wore me down and within a year, and for the second time in my life, I left the organisation with no plans for the future.

This was the second time in my life that I felt that the work I was doing was futile; I lost all sense of self-respect as I failed to see any purpose in the work that I was doing. This was in stark contrast to the sense of recognition (Honneth, 1995) I felt as a teacher.

## **Conclusion**

So despite being born into structures of inequality which could have circumscribed my success – I have flourished (Honneth, 1995). I have been successful, and I have agency. Educational attainment has brought with it capital: social, cultural, economic and symbolic. In confronting myself in this chapter, I have realised that my class transition was not about escape, a desire for a better life and 'bettering the self' (Lawler 2000), but instead was based on gaining legitimacy or what Honneth (1995) would call recognition, in the form of love, rights and solidarity. Whilst I initially thought that my feelings of illegitimacy were based merely on the experiences of the lived relations of class; I am now able to recognise that while growing up, socio-economic disadvantage had a huge part to play in forming my primary habitus, there was also a much more personal, indeed psychological, side to my story, my relationship with my mum, demanding attention. A story that I had never had the courage to face before.

I now am able to appreciate that, for me, attainment of educational qualifications brought with it love. In my childhood, my mum was proud of the fact that despite

her/our disadvantage both my brother and I were successful at school: our academic achievement was evidence of her own recognition as a good mother. But as I made the most of greater opportunities for further educational development, in my own bid to combat feelings of deficiency and illegitimacy in the middle-class world I was beginning to inhabit, I was gaining a legitimate middle-class specific knowledge or intelligence (Lawler, 2000) from which my mum felt more and more excluded. So what started out as a means to make my mum love me more, ended up alienating her and creating greater distance between us. This is explored further in the next chapter. A further significance of this chapter is that it presents a number of turning-points in my life-story; points at which I, or other people, in one way or another have been instrumental in changing my social, material and personal circumstances through loving respectful relationships.

## **Chapter 7: The lived experience of the ‘working-class’ teacher educator**

In this chapter, through ‘the phenomenology of a working-class academic’s consciousness’ (Overall, 1995, p. 209), I examine my awareness of the social category of an academic from a working-class background. Even today, the academic culture predominantly reflects the dominant middle-class, white, male discourse. And it is widely recognised that academic setting is not uniformly experienced, and those students and lecturers from non-traditional backgrounds i.e. those who are not white, middle-class and male (Mirza, 1995), can be disadvantaged by institutional cultures that places them as ‘other’ (Read, Archer and Leathwood, 2003; Reay, David and Ball, 2005; West, 1996; Chapman Houlst, 2009). In this chapter, I now focus on the ways in which an institution, that everyone takes for granted, is experienced by someone who sits outside the norm.

This chapter presents phase two of my research data in which I offer my memories and reflections (written as a historical diary in a traditional typeface) of entering the academy, and the lived experience of being a teacher educator, alongside primary data in the form of *excerpts from my field notes (FN) and research diary (RD) (inscribed in a typeface that suggests hand written notes)*. My critical analysis of the subjective experience offers the final layer in this layered account (Ronai, 1995). As in the previous chapter my analytical frameworks are Bourdieu and Honneth.

### **Entering the academy**

Here I am, a Senior Lecturer in Primary Education in a university; a scholar? an academic? How did I get here? and who am I? It seems, I have become a teacher educator by default. I had no ambition to work in higher education

and furthermore had no expectations of what it would be like.

I joined the university around 10 years ago. Like many of my colleagues, I entered teaching in initial teacher education as an extension of my successful practice as a primary school teacher.

Entry into the institution was phased. I started off working on a sessional basis (what would now be called a zero hours' contract). In the first year or so, I taught on both undergraduate and postgraduate teacher education programmes. I liked working with all the student teachers, most of whom were really committed to becoming outstanding practitioners, but I particularly liked working with postgraduate students as they were more likely to be able to reflect and think critically about teaching and education. I found these conversations exhilarating yet challenging. The students came from a wide range of backgrounds; some had so much cultural capital and I remember feeling envious about the breadth of their experiences and their confidence, while others were struggling to cope academically, financially and socially. The gap between those who had capital and those who did not was clearly evident in the classroom. This was apparent not only in the knowledge the middle-class student teachers brought into the room, but also in the ways that they conducted themselves with an assuredness that was enviable. This was something that resonated back to my own experiences when I was undertaking my own teacher education.

I quickly gained respect as a tutor from the student teachers, who appreciated the recent experiential

knowledge of school teaching. When I reflect back on my teaching, I would say that it was mostly instrumental as I concentrated on sharing with the students as much of my own knowledge about teaching and learning as I could. Alongside teaching, I worked closely with student teachers in school in a mentoring capacity, all of this work drawing on my expertise.

When I joined the faculty, there was a strong emphasis on good teaching and the student experience: research activity did not seem to be a priority, with few colleagues engaged in research at that time. Like many of my colleagues I had a heavy teaching commitment: I had just enough time to plan, teach and assess. But I had a good mentor who, while of course supporting my capacity to teach in higher education, encouraged me from the outset to engage in, albeit rather small, acts of scholarly activity: reviewing academic texts and contributing to smaller, less prestigious refereed journals. This was an important part of my induction as 'proper' academic.

I really liked my colleagues, all, like me, qualified school teachers with a significant career record of successful practice in primary or secondary school settings. However, I remember trying to fit in with the culture of the university, and despite the welcome I still felt I was the wrong class - my 'way of being' seemed all wrong. It seems I was too loud, too outspoken and too honest. I can remember when I attended one of the scholarship days, one of my peers talking about her research in which she was examining the resilience of learners in higher education. She was talking about me!

In entering academia, I became a hybrid, an outsider becoming an insider (Stanley, 1995) and as such occupied a structurally contradictory role in relation to academe. I was aware that the setting was middle class and as a woman born into social, economic and cultural deprivation, despite my efforts to assimilate a middle-class habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990) I knew I still couldn't 'do middle-class right' (Skeggs, 1997, p.82): I do not have 'the set of distinctive features; bearing, posture, presence, diction, and pronunciation, manners and usages' ..... 'without which.... all scholastic knowledge is worth little or nothing' (Bourdieu, 1984, p.91).

Whilst there are many more of my colleagues who come from 'first generation university student' or working-class backgrounds compared to other university faculties and/or other universities, the faculty as a whole is still structured around middle-class neoliberal values. As such, I was situated in an institution that structurally positions people like me.

## **Confronting the teacher educator**

If we are to take human agency seriously, we must acknowledge the degree to which historical and objective forces leave their ideological imprint on the psyche itself. To do so is to lay the groundwork for a critical encounter between oneself and the dominant society to acknowledge what this society has made us, and decide whether that is what we truly want to be (Giroux, 1983, p. 149).

Through my teaching I began to gain self-confidence, and self-respect, largely due to feeling like a morally accountable subject through the moral respect and recognition of the students (Honneth, 1995). I even began to see myself as an equal to my peers but also self-esteem (legitimacy in a wider academic community) was developing, 'psychosocially', in the interplay of outer and inner cultural and psychological capital.

But, I felt a fraud. Although I had considerable experience in teaching, I was really only one step ahead of my students - my lack of research and theoretical

knowledge was evident, even if only to me. I began to form my own very strong epistemological beliefs about what teacher education was and what it was not. It was when I started to teach on research modules that I began to recognise the importance of the interplay between research and practice, not just for the students, but most importantly for my own work. I felt as a teacher educator I should be encouraging the students to ask the big questions about teaching and learning.

It is becoming widely recognised that teacher educators operate in a liminal space, or as Bhabha (1994) would argue is a third space in which they are neither teacher nor academic. As Ellis, McNicholl and Pendry (2012) maintain, the role of teacher educator, with its focus on the academic as well as the professional, is quite different to other academic faculties. And according to Murray and Male (2005) it takes two to three years for beginning teacher educators to make the transition from teachers to becoming a confident teacher of teachers.

This led to some deep reflection about my purpose and role within the faculty – to me it was not good enough merely to be a teacher of teachers; the students, the institution, and I, deserved more. However, the overriding drivers for our work as teacher educators focuses on the practicalities of ensuring that student teachers meet the Teachers' Standards (Department for Education, 2011a) because English initial teacher education was, and still is, subject to intensive monitoring and regulation by the Department for Education and Ofsted. I was caught in another liminal space, wanting to do what I considered to be the right thing for teacher education, while adhering to the technical rationalist regime within the faculty.

Critical pedagogy became my way of expressing my sense of social responsibility and activism.

I seemed to be one of only a minority of colleagues that thought that being a teacher educator was more than training our students to meet the performative standards set by the Department for Education. I became known for being the voice of dissent.

### **Voice of dissent**

The extracts from my reflective diary below, exemplify how I was constantly challenging the technical rational systems in the faculty, in the period commencing my PhD. At this time an OfSTED inspection was imminent and a new senior management team had introduced a regime that was prioritising achievement of Qualified Teacher Status over academic considerations. I felt they had lost sight of what teacher education was, and could and should be.

*I can't quite believe what I heard today – we [the programme team] have been told that from September we will be teaching groups larger than 30 [groups at this time were between 25-30 for most, although some subjects were teaching groups of 15]. When I challenged the Programme Director they just shrugged their shoulders and said we had to get on with it. So I went to see the Head of Department. I presented a strong case against larger groups; more tutorial support, more marking etc. They explained to me that there was little we could do as we could not afford smaller groups. To be honest this was the response I expected but I felt that I had to voice my opposition. If no-one speaks up to management, they will just take more and more from us. (RD: July 2012).*



For me, this was action was about justice and equality, and about challenging hegemonic practices. The change of group size was imparted in a way that implied that if we [the team] did not comply our jobs would be at risk; but of course it really meant that we were all being asked to work even harder. Taking a broader perspective, it also meant that we were preventing the employment of a much needed member of staff.

Our mock Ofsted inspection report pointed out that some of our assignments are not having an impact on students' professional development. In the meeting, when I suggested that the students do an action research project as an extended part of, or within their professional placement, they [the PD] argued it was too late to organise a change in the timetable because rooms are already booked. (Again the tail of the administrative systems is wagging the dog). [They said] Also the students need to focus on gaining QTS and action research will be a distraction. This response is just typical of the way in which a technical-rationalist agenda is making education faculties feel cautious about anything not directly accountable for enabling students to meet the Teachers' Standards. I have decided to pilot this idea with my own cohort of research students, offering them the chance to undertake their research during their placement or during the research weeks - I do hope some take it up. (RD: May 2013).

This, and the example below, exemplify the position I took in these situations. I voiced my dissent and when this was ignored or dismissed I forged ahead and found my own way of compromising. Some might say I show a

healthy disrespect for the system and or indeed the symbolic violence being enacted by those in power.

As Programme Directors we have been told [by the Head of Department] that all students need to complete a 32 point self-efficacy questionnaire on how they feel about behaviour management at the beginning of the programme, after the first professional placement and at the end of the year. It is a crude tool and I said so in the meeting we had today. I am completely opposed to it. It is merely a tool to evidence progress....Of course a student who has never stepped foot in the classroom will be anxious about behaviour management and of course they will improve by the end, otherwise we will not have done our job. I was told that it is now a directive and we all had to do it and the discussion was closed down. I need to think carefully about how to introduce this to the students on my programme (RD: September 2013). I have put a notice on the VLE asking students to undertake the survey once as a tool for discussion with their tutor about their development needs. I will not be asking them to complete one at three stages of their training as directed. (RD: October 2013).

Not again..... yet another session in which we all sat down to discuss what our core values are. (RD: September 2014). Our values have now been through the 'appropriate hands' and they have come up with a set of values for the department. I can't say that everyone's opinions have not been included but certainly some of the big issues that my table talked about e.g. critical thinking are not represented. (RD October 2014).

This period was a difficult time for me. I found it very difficult to comply with technical rational directives that seemed pointless, and added to our workload. If one was not willing to comply you were excluded and marginalised; what Honneth (1995) would argue is being structurally excluded from participation as 'a fully-fledged partner ...equally endowed with moral rights' (1995, p.133). The next two extracts from my diary are illustrative of this.

I went to see the Dean today about what I feel is a very unhealthy 'elite' culture in the department.

(Taken from my notes prior to the meeting)

There are unfair practices in the advertising and recruitment of management/leadership positions in the department; with people being selected for roles that have not been advertised. This is divisive and has undermined people's self-worth and contribution to the department.

Some projects are supported by the HoD [Head of Department] dependent on who they are presented by, not on the merit of the project.

There is an elite group of people who have ease of access to the HoD and I think this is unhealthy and discriminatory practice.

There is a micro-management of staff that means that we feel we have no autonomy. (Meeting with the Dean, 2012).

J. and I had had enough. We went to see the Head of Department about the constant demands being made to gather data, which is then either ignored or obscured so that one

programme (not ours) looks more successful than others. They listened and made excuses, but we did not let them off the hook. We challenged and challenged until we felt that we had been listened to (RD: April 2013).

We were also in the process of revalidating some of our programmes.

I was shocked to hear that there is a proposal to reduce the contact hours for teaching so that the students could spend more time in school [to achieve QTS]. I know I directed my frustration at the wrong person, but if we do this we are complicit in the demise of teacher education in higher education. No-one else spoke up of course! (RD: June 2012).

In a meeting today I was told I was a pessimist when I was merely sharing facts about some of the student teachers' experiences and how I think this will play out in the future. Why has realism suddenly become synonymous with the word pessimist. This constant denial of facts is irksome and unrealistic. Surely we can't effect change if we do not open our eyes and acknowledge what is happening. (RD: October 2013).

While I attempt to adopt the cultural dispositions valued in my new cultural milieu, through ways of dressing and speaking, I feel I am being constantly undermined through the tacit and subtle distinctions of class difference. Any dissent from the dominant view was met with disdain and disrespect; marginalisation and exclusion was a regular occurrence. It is a sad fact that there remained structures of power that resulted in cultural and symbolic exclusion (Honneth, 2007).

I am sure that the reader will notice that there are no recent entries that illustrate dissent – this is because I have made a conscious decision to remove myself from any situations that meant I was directly exposed to technical rational systems. Furthermore, engaging in doctoral study has provided me with another outlet to manage my frustrations.

Beneath the surface rationality of the faculty there was a mass of conflicts, tensions, resentment, competing interests and power imbalance that influences everyday interactions in the organisation. There is no denying that ‘policy micro politics’ (Hoyle, 1982) was enacted which had an impact on the lived experience of us all. In this way the culturally marginal (like me) are identified as the ‘other’ and are sometimes treated as irrelevant and/or inferior as a status group. We are subjected to a kind of cultural imperialism that renders us either invisible or, if visible, subjects of misrecognition (Honneth, 1995). I am not suggesting that there is a conscious and deliberate agenda to exclude us, those of us who challenge the dominant ideology, but there was a culture in which certain groups, those with a strong sense of justice, were being silenced. This disregard to the ideas of ‘the other’ is an example of what Bourdieu would call symbolic violence (1994); and what Honneth (2007) would call disrespect through a process of institutional individualisation.

### **Love, rights and solidarity in the faculty**

In 2013, in a cruel twist of fate I was made Programme Director for one of our largest programmes. The former Programme Director had left at short notice, leaving the programme in disarray, no-one else wanted to /or was experienced enough to take on the job, so I rather reluctantly took it on. This not only meant a massive change in my workload in terms of what I was doing on a day-to-day basis; less teaching and more administration. It also meant that I was exposed to the technical rational systems of the faculty and university more often

and at a deeper level. I found myself in constant conflict with administration systems and management as I tried to hold on to what I believed was right and just for the programme, our student teachers and indeed teacher educators.

This was also the year that the programme was grossly oversubscribed. I remember the first day - there were too many students to fit into our largest lecture theatre. This meant huge problems with timetabling and finding professional placements which put an additional burden on me morally, physically and emotionally.

I placed my final student today (3 weeks late). The university's drive to recruit as many students as we can, more than we can really cope with, has put a huge strain on administrative resources and an immense emotional strain on me as I have tried to appease fee paying students and accommodate staff demands for rooms. It also means that some schools are overstretched and some students have been placed in settings that are unsuitable. The sense of responsibility and injustice is almost overwhelming especially with distinct lack of visibility of the Senior Leadership Team. (RD: November 2013).

I was consistently working twelve hour days, to stay on top of the workload. When I raised issues I was often made to feel like I was a nuisance. While I felt valued by most of the students on the programme. The senior management team seemed either to ignore or diminish the challenges I was facing on a day to day basis. The year took its toll on me.

As Reay (2005) points out, those of us from working-class backgrounds have a heightened self-awareness and self-consciousness, and highly developed practices of self-monitoring and self-vigilance. It is important here to acknowledge that I have internalised feelings of the middle-class hegemony that has led me to see myself as less worthy than my colleagues. So, I care about how I am seen by the 'other'. I feel I have to prove myself. I constantly doubt my own judgements; even after all these years, I am never free of the judgements of imaginary, or real others, who I perceive as positioning me as inferior or inadequate. Honneth's (1995, 2007) theory fully acknowledges that the concept of recognition is more than being recognised as legitimate, it is about feeling understood and feeling valued: the embodied, affective and normative nature of the social. When individuals encounter each other in society they have the expectation that they will reciprocally recognise each other's fundamental needs (Honneth, 2007) so, this lack of recognition on behalf of the management team for my emotional and physical well-being, what Honneth (1995) would call love, made me feel invisible. The lack of recognition for not only my efforts, but my well-being, demonstrated a lack of respect and denied me access to universal rights accorded to all members of a society (Honneth, 1995). Furthermore, this symbolic exclusion through the denial of my contribution to the shared projects of that faculty (Ibid) deprived me of the opportunity to attribute social value to my own abilities (Honneth, 1995) leading to feelings of social subordination and social suffering in the workplace.

As the impending inspection drew closer a note in my diary highlights the micro politics going on in the faculty.

*Ofsted is driving us into camps. Unfortunately for me and for the students, the programme sits between two senior leaders who seem to have different and competing self-interests. Sometimes this means that my programme gets forgotten or ignored and at other times it plays to my advantage as I am able to ignore what I see as pointless directives (RD: November 2013) .*

In particular, I have found speech has proved to be an identifier of social position, as Bourdieu points out

Language is a body technique, and specifically linguistic, especially phonetic competencies a dimension of bodily hexis in which one's whole relation to the social world, and one's whole socially informed relation to the world are expressed (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 86).

All linguistic practices are measured against the legitimated practice of the field. I know I practise a more direct communication style, which is often more expressive of my feelings than most of my colleagues. I appreciate this makes me appear confrontational, truculent or belligerent, whereas I perceive speaking my mind and sharing my opinions as evidence of honesty and integrity. This contrast sharply with the silence and obedience to authority which seems to be the appropriate demeanor in the academy. Within the academy, middle-class values create a barrier to ward off dissent, silencing those of us whose ideas go against the dominant view. This expression of symbolic violence results in the practice of anticipated censorship or self-censorship based on the social situation and an understanding of what can and can't be said (Bourdieu, 1991).

*The straw that broke the camel's back. Despite doing my best with no support – there I was being admonished because I have allegedly upset an administrator – no-one even listened to my perspective before making a judgement. They just assumed that I was in the wrong. I have resigned from programme director role. I have completely lost confidence in the management team to support me, now and in the future. If I step down from this role I can avoid the day-to-day issues with administration and management which minimises the direct intrusion of authority on my work life. I have made a conscious decision to absent myself from anything bureaucratic or with anyone who takes a technical rationalist approach (RD: June 2014).*



Not being supported in this role was the beginning of my disillusionment. Moral injury resulted when there was disrespect shown for my dignity, honour or integrity (Honneth, 2007) as is illustrated in the data.

*Every meeting I sit in it feels like I am an outsider, counter the dominant culture. It is a very lonely place to be – if you speak out [against hegemonic practices] people just look at you as if you are nuisance and if you stay quiet you seethe? (RD: October 2015).*

In any field, individuals read one another's habitus, and associate ideas and assumptions about socio-economic backgrounds in the same ways that they perceive any other difference (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

In the process of undertaking this research I have become more aware of the dissonance between my own perception of my 'self' and the perception of others, my identity. It is evident from my data that there is an ongoing tension between my substantial self and my identity. Within my own institution class divisions are not explicit, but they do exist in the ways people experience, subjectively, their daily lives in terms of inclusion and exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage, specific aspirations and specific identities. In a context 'where the middle-class operate with a sense of entitlement to social space and economic rewards' (Skeggs 1997, p.132); my narrative presents evidence of symbolic violence (real or perceived) in the form of exclusion and marginalisation.

Constant reminders that I do not really belong to my 'new' habitus originate from two sources; the first through symbolic violence and lack of recognition as described in the previous chapters, but secondly through forces present inside me; specifically, the lack of a history of being middle-class has engendered a set of anxieties. This is the moral significance of class (Sayer, 2005). Class matters not only because of differences in material wealth and economic security, but class has a real effect on the way people live their lives and treat one another, influencing everyday interactions within and between class groups (Ibid). Class concern is also about having access to

the practices and ways of living that are valued, and class renders this access highly unequal (Sayer 2005). There is continual reminder that 'the habitus claimed is not one which can be fully inhabited' (Lawler, 1999, p.17).

I was shocked when xxx said that 'the thing they hated most in academia was when an academic says they are from the working-class -it is embarrassing that people feel that they have to share their class as a badge of honour - what do they want?'. This was clearly someone that has never experienced what it is like to be, and how it feels to be, denied access to privilege. I was at once affronted personally, but it has also made me have huge doubts about my PhD and academic purpose. What if my readers think the same about my work? Is it wrong of me to display my own sense of self in my thesis? Does it show authenticity or is it an act of defiance that people find offensive as alluded to in the above comment? (RD July, 2017).

'While one can appear to be a native in an adopted land, one is always haunted by voices from the other side of the border' (Dews and Law, 1995, p. 7). Whilst I do not feel I have to wear my class origin like a badge of honour I do think it is important not to deny or underestimate the power of class inequality to shape lives. Because of my need to acquire the secondary habitus, colleagues may not even see the 'working-class' side of me, many may not even spot a different originary habitus (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016), but what most do recognise is a very strong sense of justice and an active resilience to hegemonic practice.

The university is a unique space where cultural rather than economic capital is the dominant currency and while I acknowledge that I have now acquired my own measure of social, and cultural capital (so much so that the person above could not even recognise that I was one of the very people they were talking about) they are not inherited. I have instead bought them within systems of education. But, I have realised

'crossing from one world to another is never fully achieved for the working-class academic; the transformation is never complete. It is clear that within my own academic field, there is a dominant position and a subjugated position, and whilst it is never overtly class, or gender based, small yet subtle acts of symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1994) or actions of disrespect (Honneth, 2007) are enacted every day.

The next year, after I had resigned from the Programme Director role, I elected to teach on my institution's School Direct programme. School Direct is a school-led route into teaching. It is run in partnership between a lead school, other schools and an accredited teacher training provider; with the lead school having overall responsibility for the provision of the training. While I had my reservations about this programme, because I think it offers students a narrow anti-intellectual and uncritical experience of learning to teach, I wanted to work on the programme so I could challenge this notion.

There are advantages to having a dual habitus: it gives me a unique mode of seeing (Brooks, 2007). I have a double consciousness; an understanding of both working-class and middle-class life so I can see both perspectives, weaving back and forth between the two. This viewpoint has made me hypersensitive to displays of symbolic violence designed to keep all but those who have the capital to be able to 'play the game' out of the system.

*I was really disappointed, even embarrassed, to see a colleague of mine who is an EdD student throwing their academic weight around with potential students who came for interview – asking philosophical questions and using language that is difficult to access for undergraduates – what is that about? (RD March 2015).*

It also enables me better to empathise with the experiences of students who come from socio-economic disadvantage and other minority groups. Here is a classic example of misrecognition.

A bland corporate response (and uncaring) from the Programme Director to a question I have raised about a student on professional placement. The school have reported that the student is underperforming: getting in late, leaving early, and is not ready to teach so they have withdrawn the placement. When I spoke to the student he came up with a range of excuses but finally admitted that he was, in addition to his full time training, working in a call centre from 6pm – 11pm at night three days a week. I suggested he gave it up but he said he could not, because his family are really poor and couldn't afford to support him whilst he is training. How does he stand a chance? This is why the profession is made up of mostly people from middle-class. It is so hard for people who do not have financial capital let alone social and cultural capital. I then seek out the organisation's policies on equality and diversity; included in the 'Equality Objectives'; considerations are made for age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion and the ethnic origin of our student teachers and staff but there is no mention of any consideration given to those students who come from disadvantaged background. I wonder if it is because it is not legislated. How does this sit with the institutions values and beliefs? (RD: November, 2015).

As a member of a minority group who has succeeded in education – 'une miraculée' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990), I have failed to identify completely with the system that has enabled my success. I admit that I am refusing to integrate myself completely

into the university system because I struggle to understand the principles and values of the institution which continues to present challenges to people, like me, who do not have a middle-class habitus. Like the class 'transfuges' – a class defector, someone who has crossed social boundaries, (Bourdieu, 1998) I am caught in a 'painful' position of social limbo, of 'double isolation', from both my class of origin and destination class.

As Morley (1997) states 'one could be deceived into thinking that mere entry into the academy automatically transforms class experiences and allegiances from working-class to middle-class' (1997, p. 116). But it is clear that I am struggling to position myself within the institution – wanting to do right by the students and unable to comply with the system which has led to feelings of disillusionment and estrangement

## **Disillusionment and estrangement**

To what degree do our ordinary employments corrupt the courage of our minds? (Harvey, 2005, p.187).

### **Disillusionment**

It is important to acknowledge that since joining the university in 2007, the socio-political ideology of society in general has changed and so have the discourses about education and teacher education. I cannot deny that I have become disillusioned by the education system, and particularly teacher education, in England. I continue to teach on the School Direct route despite my reservations. I think this route is a way of reducing democratic spaces where student teachers can talk freely about teaching and learning without the fear of recrimination by the people making assessments of them. Because of this I started to question my own values and

beliefs about the purpose of higher education, and my role within it.

The compelling *raison d'être* for teacher education, for me, is to intellectualise teaching and learning and to have teacher educators who can prepare the teachers of the future, as intellectuals, so they can be critical thinkers and introduce children to critical thinking through their pedagogy. I am overtly political in my teaching and will use personal anecdotes to challenge and engage my students about how they see families from socio-economic disadvantage. As such I reveal my own subjectivity and interests, while at the same time legitimate or challenging the subjectivity of my students. But as I saw the shift by the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government towards school-based teacher education I really began to question my sense of purpose.

I have developed a strong sense of my identity as a teacher educator; in what I think is important. But how do I hold on to that in my own beliefs about what I think is important in the face of the drive for school-based initial teacher training and so much technical rationalism. This has become a constant source of frustration but also a constant source of conflict with the expectations of colleagues, especially senior management. (RD: July 2013).

Yet another discussion about the tension between issues around critical thinking vs content subject knowledge coverage. All the tutors in the room argue that they did not have time to introduce critical thinking when there was so

much content to cover.....I tried to argue that if we gave students the confidence to engage critically and consider the effect of teaching and learning on their students, they would have a greater ability to reflect on practice in school. I am now beginning to appreciate that perhaps I am in a minority in thinking that we need to introduce a more critical pedagogy (RD. September, 2013).

Shouldn't we as teacher educators be at the forefront raising questions about the government's ideology (practice-based teacher education) than colluding with it? If we don't who will? Shouldn't we be defending our position that the best teacher education happens in partnership with schools and universities working together. This shift to school-based teacher education is really worrying me. I am concerned that student teachers no longer have a safe democratic space within which to critique educational practices. (RD: November 2013).

We had yet another conversation about what subject-knowledge the student teachers need and how we might build it into our sessions. How will I be able to reconcile this in my own teaching? How can I satisfy the need of the instrumentalists whilst engaging in a critical pedagogy? (RD: February 2015). (A later annotation written over the top of this entry highlights the influence of the PhD). This is what the PhD is doing. It is making me think much more deeply about what I do and why as a teacher educator (RD. No date).

Even early on in my career, in the absence of an academic imperative for my work I realised that student teachers' perceptions of teaching and learning, modelled by their tutors, form the building blocks of their personal and professional identity - so to me it was important that we are also intellectuals and raise questions about what is happening in education.

It is not good enough just to pass on to student teachers what worked for me. I think it is important to provide them with the knowledge and confidence to be the teachers they want to be. Teacher educators should be intellectualising teaching and learning rather than providing merely technical knowledge. I want my students to develop a critical pedagogy so that they too can engage in ideology critique, so that they can understand how the constructs and categories we use to understand daily experiences are ideologically framed. (RD: May 2011)

I have become increasingly disillusioned with the practice of teacher education at national, local and individual levels. The effect of School-based routes in to teaching mean that teacher education programmes offer very little intellectual content. It seems that according to the current government's agenda teaching can be delivered as a series of rules, facts and strategies to be learnt applied and mastered (Loughran 2013). In this model, instead of learning to raise questions about the principles underlying classroom methods, students are preoccupied with mastering the best way to teach a given body of knowledge; they are



reduced to technicians carrying out the dictates of policy makers.

Instead student teachers are finding themselves 'invested in a notion of unattached individualism that severs them from any [general] sense of moral and social responsibility' (Giroux, 2012, p.73) I am constantly frustrated by the systemic failure to educate teachers to be critical, I see my role within the programme on which I teach as someone who tries to ensure that students are engaging with intellectual activity through critical pedagogy. Like Sisyphus, repeatedly rolling his rock uphill, I have continued to encourage students and colleagues to see the benefits of academic study alongside Qualified Teacher Status.

*I am seriously worried about the fact that student teachers are now being exposed mostly only to practice; especially when it is evident from discussion with mentors that they believe experience in school is the only important part of learning to be a teacher (RD: October 2014).*

Teaching on a school-based route has presented me with some particular moral and ethical challenges about what it is to be a teacher; and importantly, for me, what it is to be a teacher educator.

*I want our student teachers to go on to be reflective agents of change. I want my/our student teachers to appreciate, in the truest sense of the word, the relation between theory and practice; to understand that practice should be based on and informed by a theoretical understanding of the principles of*

education. How do I enable student teachers to become more aware of their own assumptions? How do I help them distinguish between immutable facts and alternative ideas? How can I help them feel that they can action change? (FN: August, 2012)

As time has passed, my role as a teacher educator has become less and less about academic work, and more about maintaining difficult relationships with students and schools, quality assurance of schools and accreditation of student teachers. I now find myself sitting uncomfortably within the institution teaching on a programme that I believe offers a narrow vision of what it is to be a teacher based on a neoliberal ideology.

Our programmes are becoming more and more focused on OfSTED priorities and less about concepts of truth, knowledge and justice, these have all but gone from initial teacher education in a bid to please Ofsted inspectors. The repressiveness of this agenda is recognised by most of us, but no-one is prepared to do anything about it. (RD December, 2014).

The hidden curriculum or as Bourdieu often refers to it 'pedagogic action' (Bourdieu, 1990), the unstated norms, values and beliefs that are transmitted to students through the underlying structure of meaning in both the formal content as well as the social relations of classroom life (Giroux, and Penna 1979), applies equally to learning that happens in initial teacher education. Bourdieu (1990) argues that all pedagogical action is symbolic violence as it is the 'imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power' (1990, p.5). Student teachers do not only learn what is being specifically taught to them, they also learn what kind of knowledge is most valued by the institution. The hidden curriculum within our institution, and maybe other initial

teacher education providers, is that professional practice and meeting the Teachers' Standards (Department for Education, 2011a) practice is more important than 'being' a teacher .

*Just read (Dall 'Alba [and Barnacle], 2007). They write about what it means to BE a teacher. In their definition, learning is not confined to the heads of individuals, but involves integrating ways of knowing, acting and being that takes hold of the soul and transforms it in its entirety. This must be a central and ongoing question for the leaders of teacher education programmes. Of course there is a need to follow changes impacting upon practice; but learning to BE [emphasis in the original diary extract] a teacher should also involve transforming the self. I would like to argue that we have a significant role in this, that goes beyond transmission of knowledge, an overloaded curricular, and an emphasis on accountability. (RD: December 2016).*

It would be easy for me to merely accept the ideological approach but because of my critical perspective I resent the imposition and collusion with the dominant ideology. I am constantly frustrated by the clash of ideologies brought about by the external forces of government policy and the internal demands of the senior management team, which are in direct conflict with my own values and beliefs about teaching and learning and teacher education. I have not allowed my employment to corrupt the courage of my mind (Harvey, 2005) but with this arises feelings of disillusionment.

The entries above reveal a dialectical relationship between the structural forces of the institution and my values and beliefs, in particular, the conflict between my vision of

what teacher education ought to be and the reality of working in a large bureaucratic institution functioning as a result of neoliberal policy. What I think is important in teacher education, what theories I draw on and how to teach, and of course my identity as a teacher educator, is shaped by my ontology and epistemology. For me my classroom is a site of loving, trusting relationships where consciousness and ideology can be interrogated. This contradicts sharply with the government's policies across all sectors of the education system. As Mahony and Zmroczek (1997) concluded, critical epistemological assumptions and resulting pedagogical practices are most noticeable in lecturers from working-class origin.

Misrecognition through disenfranchisement, in which I have been hindered from sharing my contributions in the faculty, has led to 'the feeling of not enjoying the status of a full-fledged partner to interaction equally endowed with moral rights' (Honneth, 1995, p.133). This has led to self-estrangement.

## **Estrangement**

Moi (1991) maintained that the 'miraculé' i.e. members of minority groups who succeed in education, are as likely to identify with the ostensibly egalitarian institution as the enabling cause of their success, as to turn against its unjust distribution of symbolic capital. This may be true of many upwardly mobile academics, but my own feelings of disillusionment and estrangement seem to be fairly consistent with feelings identified by the academic friends with whom I have walked the road (Dews and Law, 1995; Ryan and Sackrey, 1984; Morley and Walsh, 1995; Mahony and Zmroczek, 1997; Van Galen and Dempsey, 2009; and Mitchell, Wilson and Archer, 2015).

Today, and to my regret, my feelings towards the academy are ambivalent. On the one hand, I am proud to be part of an intellectual community, and like many 'miraculés', I identify with the intellectual values of the system; whilst at the same time I recognise that the academy is a means an unjust distribution of symbolic capital (Moi,

1991) and can see and feel how this has a damaging effect on students and lecturers from lower classes.

Feelings of illegitimacy and increasing disillusionment with the system are a great source of distress to me and have led to a place of self-imposed estrangement. I try to avoid contact with the university, especially those in authority, in a bid to resist the direct intrusion of authority on my daily work practices; instead preferring to elect to spend time with people who share a critical perspective. Of course I know this is not a good situation to be in, but it is the only way I can protect myself from further moral injustices.

In my institution, as in many others I suspect, there are practices in place that are intended to hinder or prevent individual action and prevent individuals and groups from sharing their particular experiences of injustice, which Honneth (2007) defines as 'institutional individualisation'. There are fewer meetings that are safe spaces to share opinions and objections to the dominant status quo; instead meetings are directed and focused on conforming to the neoliberal agenda and implementation of technical rationalism.

*I have made a conscious and deliberate decision not to attend any more department meetings. It is always the same people with the biggest egos who do least work who are wheeled out to tell the rest of us how to do our jobs better. (RD: September 2015).*

While Bourdieu's theory of habitus, field and capital has contributed to my understanding feelings of illegitimacy in the academy, it did not go far enough to explain the subjective experience of being a working-class academic in higher education. The constant feeling that my opinions and contributions were being

ignored served further to increase feelings of insecurity and inferiority. The constant denial of the value of my judgments when it is made known my contribution is not valuable, continuously undermined my sense of self-significance (Honneth, 2007). Failing to have my voice heard has stripped me of opportunities to attribute social value to my own abilities (Honneth, 1995). The 'feeling of not enjoying the status of a full-fledged partner to interaction equally endowed with moral rights' (Honneth, 1995, p.133) has led to feelings of isolation, both imposed and self-imposed.

Furthermore, I have become estranged from my family. My social mobility seems to have provoked a 'call to order' – a sense of 'who does she think she is?' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 380) in my parents. My story, shared by others, for example, Steedman (1986) and the contributors to Lawler's (2000) study on mothers and daughters, tells a story of a particularly painful struggle between middle-class daughter and working-class mother. I now realise that my move away from my parents' lifestyle was implicitly criticising it. It seems that wanting something different, something more than your parents, not only implies that there is something wrong with their life, but that there is something wrong with them.

It is difficult to avoid a sense of treachery at leaving my mum behind, and it is hard to deny that a line of connection has irrevocably been broken by me becoming educated. Like many of the daughters in Lawler's (2000) study, I think my mum found it increasingly difficult over the years to accept who I am; this has been most apparent in recent years. It has only been during this latest period of estrangement and through a careful examination of our relationship, through the process of writing my auto/biography, that I have realised that I could never fit with my mum's idealised version of what her daughter should be (I am not sure what this was...but I do know that I am not it). As a result, I am, in the words of Hoggart (2009), 'one of the uprooted and anxious' (Hoggart, 2009, p. 238). One thing for sure is that I am now certain that the catalyst for my class transition was initiated by the fragile relationship with my mum, in one way or another.

## Teaching for change

I have described the difficulties of teaching in a neoliberal climate in which increasing administrative control must be struggled against. However, despite all this I love my job. Despite all the systemic and institutional challenges described above, I enjoy most of what I do as a teacher educator. Working with student teachers brings with it love, rights and solidarity (Honneth, 1995).

*Whilst I rail against the neoliberal ideology and the technical rationalist culture in which I work, I still feel extremely privileged to be working in the academy. My working conditions are incomparable (in a favorable way) to what I would have been doing if I had remained working-class. The 'work' is varied, interesting, intellectually stimulating, and I get to meet and work with some incredibly remarkable people – students and colleagues. I work hard, but I would not trade what I do for any of my former careers. I enjoy teaching; I relish engaging with the teachers of the future, challenging their assumptions and encouraging them to think critically. (RD: March 2017).*

For the most part I now teach postgraduates at Master's Level. I have chosen to teach on these programmes as I see my teaching as a small act of political activism. I try to teach in a way that serves as a catalyst to critical thinking during which I introduce my students to critical theory to promote a way of thinking differently about education as a means of counterbalancing neoliberal ideals. Through new ways of

understanding, driven by an academic imperative, I have become more confident in my teaching, and this has meant that I teach in a way that cares for the intellectual and spiritual growth of my students. Many of my students embrace opportunities to think critically about their teaching practice and the policy context. It suggests that my research is not only having an impact on me in terms of acquiring research and knowledge for my own professional development, it is also having an impact on the students that I teach.

My pedagogy has emerged from the interplay between critical and feminist pedagogical practices. I resist being simply part of a mechanism of social reproduction, producing teachers who are unable to raise question about education policy and practice. In my teaching I attempt to transgress the educational world I inhabit, encouraging students to develop a critical consciousness and a 'discourse of possibility' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1986). My teaching practice shows a commitment to critique and analysis - both of literature and of teaching relationships, and a political commitment to building a more just society.

Most of the students I teach seem to like how I teach and I take time to build good relationships with them as this recent email from a student (shared with consent) shows

*Dear Paula*

*I would like to say a very big thank you for the session on Saturday. The manner in which you led the workshop on Saturday was exemplary!*



*You were successful at engaging all of us. I certainly was. Students listened and were comfortable sharing their progress, experiences regarding the Critical Incidences with much prompt and sharing concerns. In my opinion, that was made possible because you created a warm and welcoming environment on the day.*

*You were quick to develop some kind of relationship with those of us present on Saturday. I felt at ease. You spoke with each one of us personally. You addressed each one of us and our needs as though we were the only ones present and that we mattered and you did that with all of us without exception or favourites.*

*You displayed empathy, which to me is a higher virtue than sympathy. You 'humanised' it all and shared your own journey with your PhD write up - you displayed to me that vital characteristic of a good teacher that says 'I am a lifelong learner'. You shared your mistakes which had the effect of empowerment. I was very impressed and it stirred up an inner belief in myself that I too can do it. You were encouraging and never condescending. As teachers we forget sometimes how much we have learnt and how far we have come and the mistake I have made is to expect my students to get it instantly without giving them the opportunity to grow. I expected instantaneous results. But it was not so on Saturday. Patience was most certainly a virtue displayed by you. I am learning to apply patience, care/nurture and kindness to my practice and I saw that effortlessly displayed on Saturday. You committed and dedicated your Saturday to helping us. Even though there was a time limit for the session, we did not in any way feel rushed. You had the time for all us and you patiently went from student to student to address our particular needs.*

I particularly enjoy working with the unconventional or non-traditional and 'average but highly motivated' students, as I see echoes of myself. Not only does my approach serve to empower student teachers, I am also empowered by the process. I am empowered when I recognise my capacity to be an active participant in the pedagogical process. When I teach I share my own experiences of being a student, who just like them,

struggles with challenging my assumptions, with writing and with finding an academic identity.

As I have written and understood more about my own 'classed' experiences as 'une miraculée', I have become more conscious of my actions a role model for students. This consciousness has made me re-consider the content of my teaching, and my pedagogy: all the time I address areas of social inequality.

The highlight of my teaching experience is when I 'ignite the flame', when students connect with my teaching and start to challenge their own assumptions; this is when I feel I am doing something worthwhile.

*One of my students has been awarded 'The Founders Prize' for his essay (Can an enrichment activity be used as a way of raising aspirations among students from disadvantaged backgrounds?). I am so proud that I persevere with encouraging the students to adopt a critical perspective. (RD. June 2017)*

I take an interest in my students, not just as student teachers but also as human beings, and have encouraged them to unravel and understand how their own life histories can have an impact on their own practices as teachers in the future.

*I am so pleased. A student has written an autobiographical study of the additional struggles a student teacher with disability must overcome. I think it is a courageous thing to do .... I hope she agrees it was worth the effort. She started out*

from a critical perspective that not enough consideration is given to the 'lived' experience of all student teachers, let alone those with disabilities. (RD. April 2017).

Some students find it particularly difficult to challenge long held assumptions that the teacher has all the answers and the facts are irrefutable. Giving up old ways of knowing or not having an answer can be painful.

A student said to me today that she wished she hadn't done the PGCE. She said that she was confused by the contradictions between what she is being told in school and what she is being 'taught' by me. She said teaching was no longer simple and it was complex and messy. I didn't know whether to feel disappointed or delighted. Of course I want her to get what she want/s needs from my sessions but I also want all students to think critically. I can only hope that in time she will appreciate the deep learning that comes from thinking critically (RD: May 2014).

The work I do as a teacher educator is affirmed again and again when my past students contact me to tell me how my teaching has enabled them to make choices about their academic, personal and professional development.

It was so lovely to see E today [A student who graduated earlier this year]. Despite the challenges of being a newly qualified teacher she is really enjoying working with the students. She told me that the conversations we had had about building loving and respectful relationships with the students underpins everything she does; this has made her popular with the students and with the senior management team in her school. She recounted story after story where she

*has stood her ground against technical rational systems because they were working against students' best interests. I am proud to be part of this. (RD: December 2016)*

Honneth (1995) contended 'that full human flourishing is dependent on the existence of well-established ethical relations – in particular love, law and ethical life, which can only be established through social interaction, loving concern, mutual respect and societal solidarity (Anderson, in Honneth, 1995, p.xi). In my teaching I model this in my own practice; I encourage my students to have a strong sense of the ethical and moral responsibility to their students when they are teaching. I embolden my students to develop a sense of what it is to be a teacher rather than just performing the tasks of teaching. I do this through relationships built on love and friendship. I show my students that I have respect for them and I recognise and value their own autonomy and agency (Honneth, 1995).

I believe that education can empower and emancipate individuals, but from my position as a working-class teacher educator, I can also see how higher education can perpetuate injustice, discrimination, and cultivate feelings of fear, insecurity and doubt, rather than engender a sense of freedom, trust and empathy. Bourdieu (1986) argued that space is important when looking at the injustices of class. He contended that working-class culture is not considered as legitimate in the middle-class space: it was either tolerated or there were demands for it to be moderated. As Honneth (2007) claimed, when individuals encounter each other in society, there is an expectation that they will reciprocally recognise each other's fundamental needs. This relationship borne out of the love and recognition of my students has enabled me to come to terms with who I am, and my place within the academy and wider world. It is what makes me feel most valued. But the relationship with some of my colleagues results in misrecognition.

## **Chapter 8: Struggling with notions of self and identity**

I have called myself a working-class teacher educator. I have argued elsewhere that this is paradoxical. All my adult life I have struggled with who I am and how I fit in in the world. I never seemed to belong. All women have to contend with the effects of their gender socialisation in the society, and indeed in the academy, but working-class women find their struggle is further complicated by the frequent but invisible denigration of the working-class (Skeggs, 1997).

Through confronting myself using auto/biography I have identified that this is, at least in part, because I have a divided habitus: I hold the values, beliefs and dispositions of two oppositional class locations. This has an impact on both my sense of self and my identity.

### **Introducing the collaborative narrative**

This chapter presents phase three of the research data which draws mostly on the ‘collaborative narrative approach’ (Arvay, 2003), written in this font to make the conversation distinct from the other types of data presented previously, in which my supervisor, Alys (pseudonym), and I explore, in depth, the struggle with conceptions of self and identity which have been a reoccurring theme throughout my research, and indeed the conversations between us over the past five years. The aim of the collaborative narrative was that, throughout our conversations, Alys, through confronting my assumptions (whether she agreed with them or not) would help me to expose my taken for granted theories about class difference, from another perspective. These conversations are interwoven with my reflections of being a teacher educator, distinguished by this font, a traditional typed font to represent this, and my critical analysis to present a layered account (Ronai, 1995).

## **Class, self and identity – feeling illegitimate**

In this extract, Alys is helping me to look more closely at what is happening in my data, not merely as a supervisor, but as a critical reader and guide.

Alys: Talk to me about the themes emerging from the data.

Paula: Struggling with self and identity [the first theme] goes all the way through my life. I was reading yesterday about authentic and inauthentic self. This started me thinking.....I wish I could be my working-class self and still be in the academy; still have my South London working-class accent legitimately, and be proud that I am a working-class woman. To fit in here, if I have, I have had to assimilate and change. I feel inauthentic.....this isn't really me. Inside me I am working-class, raised in that environment.... but in a bid to get on I have had to become this other person. This is me now.... but it still does not feel like me.

Alys: These feelings of inferiority you talk about so much; resignation..... the loss of control. I know you feel isolated and at times you feel grateful that you are here, but you don't really feel as though you should be. These have been central to our conversations over the past years.

Paula: That is part of being the 'other' class .... as a working-class person you are self-conscious about your background all the time.

Alys: Let's assume that most of your readers will be middle-class academics who will not be able to imagine that sort of childhood.

Here, Alys is addressing the fact head on that middle-class people, academics, may have difficulty imagining, indeed may misrecognise (Bourdieu, 2000) what it is to be working class as it is something that they have not experienced themselves.

Paula: .... Up until I started secondary school I was a self-confident little girl – yes we were poor and life was grim....my mum was doing as best as she could. Passing the 11+ afforded me some self-respect...then a difficult transition to secondary school, my grandad died and the entrance of my step-dad life went into chaos; life became very difficult. There were highpoints when everything was going well, but there were lots of points when there was violence, .....most often alcohol was involved. All of a sudden I became worthless, or at least I felt worthless. Despite all of my achievements I still feel that (Collaborative narrative: June, 2017).

Here, in an earlier conversation, we are discussing class

Paula: I wandered here [into the academy]. I think that because of my heritage, my origins, working is a struggle in terms of following rules while making sure that my practice matches my values and beliefs. No matter where I have worked particularly in public sector – I get into trouble. I really struggle with reconciling the [neoliberal] ideology with my values and beliefs. It would be the same in school teaching, policing, nursing, social work. For me being in a work place causes moral dilemmas and tensions. I think that's where it all started..... that's where the whole class dimension originated in my thesis. It all started with anger at the system and trying to get my voice heard about these issues.

Alys: mmm yes, tell me more

Paula: I remember you said to me in that conversation all that time ago...you said that you don't see class – I think that is the privilege of the middle class. I see everything as class. I see everything as a dominant class structure or a dominant process disadvantaging people who are not middle-class. I see everything from that perspective.

Alys: [Looking at raw data] From your field notes (October, 2011) it says here “I am from a working-class background and because of that I think education is more important to me. I am a senior lecturer and I want to be seen as someone who is recognised for doing her work with integrity and I need to be recognised”. It is that [education] that brings in that whole affective dimension .... the struggle and saviour.... this is important..... the power of education to get you through struggles..... and then you were talking about the affective dimension of being a learner and I wrote “I like that”... as you were talking... I wrote “education – struggle and savior”.

Later in the same conversation

Alys: This is a great quote from your data [RD: March 2015) “Partnership Conference – so boring. Here we are, the pinnacle of teacher education and what are we presented with – powerpoint slide after powerpoint slide about government policy, and how we need to be complying with it”. How does this rant fit in with the theoretical frameworks you have..... How is education a struggle and how is it saviour? ...

‘Ranting’ is something that is quite often levelled at me, not just in the context of the PhD, but also as a teacher educator. For those of us who do not fully possess the middle-class habitus expected in the academy, our passion or frustration is often perceived as ranting because we speak in a more direct and expressive manner. This is something that I have found to be consistent for other working-class colleagues within the faculty. Being seen as angry is the least of it, I have witnessed many, more powerful, acts of symbolic violence being enacted by middle-class colleagues on the dominated (Bourdieu, 1990) in the form of exclusion and marginalisation, as explored in the previous chapter.

Alys: [Referring to raw data] Look another example here. PhD review (October 2014). “They said suffering produces good writing”. There is the theme again, suffering, struggle...education. What you are



showing is that even without it [the thesis] being a purposeful tool, it's that tension of struggle and saviour, of empowering /enslaving dichotomy, and how it impacts on you. (Collaborative narrative: February, 2017).

These extracts from our collaborative conversation in February are illustrative of a middle class vantage point. Here Alys, a middle class woman, in her attempt to enable me to explore the impact of education on my sense of self is misrecognising (Bourdieu, 2000) the complex nature of educational and indeed social experiences of une miraculée.

Not surprisingly, class was a pivotal theme of most of our conversations. In the example below, a later conversation, Alys and I discuss educational success from our own perspectives.

Paula: This thesis is for me a chance to illustrate that despite the fact the we (working-class people) sit in a middle-class position within the academy, we, well not all of us, hold that position very easily. There is always that feeling of 'you have no right to be here' at the back of my thinking. I was thinking back to a conversation we had about class early on where you said "*I don't really think about class*". For us, my working-class friends and I, we often think about class. We often talk about 'feeling classed'.

Alys: I was also thinking about how your working-class colleagues feel. It feels very strange to me to hear that because I.... and obviously I don't understand because I have not had your experience.....I would just think to myself, if I had come from disadvantage, I have worked so hard to reach this level I would be really proud of myself. And I would feel a strength in that.

Paula. On rare occasions I do, but with us (people that I talk to) we cannot get rid of that sense of being found out; being seen as illegitimate. I feel that my story is obvious – I have come from disadvantage and I sit in academia and I have feelings of

insecurity....but as you say it is not obvious. Middle-class people often say to me you should be proud.... working-class don't say that to each other. I am not saying that only working-class people suffer hardship because that would not be true, but life has the potential to be harder for people with no capital. I see everything through a class lens. (Collaborative narrative: April 2017).

Despite our many conversations over the years Alys, by her own admission, struggled to see how academic success is not a simple case of upward social mobility, the saviour or empowerment for those who have a working-class identity. This is something well documented in the collected texts Mahony and Zmroczek (1997); Ryan and Sackrey (1984); Dews and Law (1995); Mitchell, Wilson, and Archer (2015).

But as Reay (1997) and Skeggs (1997) have acknowledged, before me, a working-class identity is not as easily reconciled with educational success as one may assume. As an academic from the working-class I have been the recipient of misrecognition in which there is a denial of values that stem from working-class habitus, and can come under pressure to conform to middle-class attitudes and dispositions through a discourse of 'appropriate' language, behaviour and taste, as the example from the same conversation below shows

Paula: Part of that of course, is that it is harder to be a learner if you are working class. Because you haven't got the economic, social, cultural, emotional capital .....In my last review there was an element of a lack of emotional capital revealed in that meeting where I suspect that someone with more cultural social and economic capital would have dealt with that in a much more emotionally controlled way.

Alys: You just became really angry

PS: I wasn't angry actually. I was.... It wasn't anger...although I know it came across like that....I think that is a class difference....it wasn't anger .....I don't know what it

was.....it was complete and utter frustration, impotence. I felt out of control. I was not angry...not for a moment did I feel anger at anybody .....even myself. I just didn't know what to do with myself. I honestly didn't know what to do with myself (Collaborative Narrative: February 2017)

I am referring here to my penultimate PhD review that took place in the month before this conversation. My thesis was not ready for submission (which of course I already knew). I could see the panel were frustrated and disappointed. They argued that my writing was merely a 'rant' against the middle-class neo-liberal ideology (which of course it was) but wasn't that the point. Of course they were right in many respects - they had to protect the institution and the integrity of the writing - but it felt like a personal attack and I became very emotional.

It is revealing that our perspective of the meeting differed. As exemplified here, academic culture and working-class culture do not always correspond. Does being emotional really indicate a lack of capital as I have suggested here? As Zandy argues 'class marks not only our tongues, but also our bodies.... Working-class people do not have the quiet hands or the neutral faces of the privileged classes' (Zandy, 1994, p.5). She continues, 'the use of the body for expression, communication, and as a substitute for abstract language ..... is rarely recognized, [sic] let alone theorized as a language system' (Ibid.). The institutional habitus, the set of dispositions of an institution, of the university, conveys a character deeply rooted in middle-class values. (Reay, 1998a). The example above seems to be a simple case of what Bourdieu (2000) would argue as an inability to recognise the cultural values and behaviour of the 'other'. The conversation with Alys above illustrates how dispositions and expected patterns of behaviour are deeply embedded within academic institutions. As exemplified here, an institutional habitus can serve to misrecognise working-class behaviour, thus

maintaining or perpetuating class inequalities. In this way, misrecognition is pervasive and complex (Bourdieu, 2000),

Alys: At what point did you realise that, or make the decision that you were middle-class?

Paula: That is it, I didn't! I can't lose that [the working-class] part of me. I don't know why. In fact, it is getting stronger. But really I am so middle-class now – my cultural tastes, my activities..... The irony of it all. It's like being two people.....

Alys: You talk a lot about being an outsider. You always say you are feeling like an outsider when actually you are not an outsider, or not so anyone would notice.

Paula: I agree; I am not sure that apart from my working-class accent, anyone would know if I was working-class or middle-class.

Alys: You come across as well spoken, very articulate, very middle-class....

Paula: Isn't that funny – that is not how I see myself at all..... I know I have the trappings of the middle-class life now. And perhaps I have learned to be deceptive about my origins – this is me 'coming out'. I don't see myself as working-class anymore but I still identify more strongly with working-class people.

This conversation promoted a lot of reflection about how I am seen by others, indeed the 'other'. It is clear that, for me, there is a constant tension between the 'substantial self' or the 'I', which relates to a set of self-defining beliefs, values and attitudes and the 'situational self' (the 'me') which alters as it interacts with different people in varying contexts (Nias, 1989, p.203). While my situational self, what I would like to call my identity, the socially constructed label through which we, as people are

understood (Ibid.) is fairly stable, I act middle-class and am seen as middle-class by my peers, my friends and my parents; it is the substantial self – the 'I', which is far less secure. I have at once tried to assimilate yet resist the colonising capacity of the middle-class dominant culture. Yet Alys' challenge to me, suggesting that I am not an outsider because I look and act middle-class because I have successfully acculturated middle-class behaviour, although intended as praise, misrecognises the contradictions, ambivalences and paradoxes of the working-class experience and serves to endorse feelings of inauthenticity (Winnicott, 1965).

Alys: Does your mum see that in you?

Paula: No. As soon as I started working in education, dressing nicely, trying to improve my accent, and climbing socially..... That's when my mum explicitly told me that she didn't like me because I was middle-class. .... it's funny when you live and breathe different social circles, that becomes your way of life; there is always tension between the two environments and indeed the two habitus ..... (collaborative Narrative February 2017)

I still feel I lack the embodied resources to acculturate fully to my new habitus which is because class transition can challenge deeply-rooted, self-defining attitudes, and values and beliefs; the personal re-definition of the 'substantial self' or the 'I' is likely to be slow, stressful and sometimes traumatic (Nias, 1989). Through this research, I feel I can at least attribute some of my feelings of a lack of belonging, which have been omnipresent throughout my life, to what I can now articulate as a divided habitus (Bourdieu, 1999). I am experiencing what Ingram and Abrahams (2016) would call a destabilised habitus in which two separate schemes of perception compete.

In my secondary habitus, the academy, I often feel I cannot behave as my true self for fear of disapproval. This feeling of inauthenticity has meant that I often perceive that I am not valued for who I am or disrespect is shown for my integrity. I am now starting to recognise that the feelings of insecurity and inferiority go beyond the habitus clivé and are actually connected to lack of recognition. This is the moral significance of class

(Sayer, 2005). Class matters 'not only because of differences in material wealth and economic security, but also because it affects our access to things, relationships experiences and practices that we have reason to value; class has a real effect on the way people live their lives and treat one another' (Sayer, 2005, p. 1). I care a great deal about how I am positioned, or at least perceive to be positioned, with respect to class and how others treat me (Sayer, 2005). I feel I am never free of the judgements of real or imaginary 'other' that position them not just as different, but as inferior or inadequate (Skeggs, 1997). Even in the intimate and trusting relationships with my supervisors there are small, but sometimes not insignificant acts of misrecognition that had the potential to delegitimise my experiences as an academic from the working-class, thus endorsing a need for assimilation and acculturation (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016) rather than authenticity.

*This is a late submission to my diary written in the last moments before my submission but I needed to write it in order to make sense of it. [As part of an audience at a conference about auto/biographical research]. I was almost paralysed by the presentation given by Helen (pseudonym) [one of my peers]. She, a self-confessed middle-class academic, was telling a story about her PhD student, a colleague of hers, who had just submitted her PhD. She recounted that after her student had submitted her PhD, she asked to see her, the supervisor, as a matter of urgency. Within a matter of minutes, the presenter said, the student was disclosing the story of her working class family and their dependency on her. The presenter went on to say that she had no idea that this woman was working class, and had assumed she was 'just like her'. With the student's consent, Helen proceeded to share the student's life in all its gory detail. She was describing me, my life. I knew why the student had requested her to see her; she was afraid that the*

'they' would not let her in – in the words of George Orwell she had firm conviction that 'they' will never allow her to do this, that, and the other. Helen kept making statements like 'my poor student, I had no idea her life was so bad'. I suspect like me she, Helen, was trying to challenge the discourse that PhD students are homogenous, but she was objectifying her. As I listened I felt like running from the room – but I sat quietly trying to reconcile my own feelings. Was I right to write auto/biographically? What if the reader objectified me in this way? Should I even submit?

[Later that week] I have decided to go ahead and submit my PhD because this entry in my diary highlights just how important it is for me, as someone who is not indigenous in the world of academia, use my position to speak on behalf of people like me so that they can realise that we too have a sense of agency. (RD. March 2017).

As an agent, I have been able to negotiate my way through the education system managing, but not reconciling transitional spaces. My auto/biography embodies a determination to overcome the challenges of being in a different social milieu, which are still disturbed by social class and its manifestations in the academy.

However, educational attainment brought with it love, rights and solidarity (Honneth, 1995), so growing up I saw academic success as a means of gain recognition. When I joined an institution in which cultural capital was the form of capital most desired, once again I felt the need to acquire the type of capital that would enable me to gain self-respect and self-worth. This may look like my motivation to undertake academic study was premediated on this basis, yet this was not a conscious motivation and I have only realised this through undertaking the research itself. This is explored in more detail in the next chapter.

## Teacher or academic – searching for identity

*Can I call myself an academic? I still feel that I have entered academia illicitly, through a service entrance. It seems that because teacher education is a professional qualification there is often a different set of expectations made of us which focuses on the personal responsibilities as a professional role model and exemplary practitioner rather than researcher /academic (RD: July 2014)*

I have started this section with this entry from my reflective diary because it is indicative of the feelings of illegitimacy I was feeling, and continue to feel, within the institution. To remind the reader, the concept of academic used in this thesis, and particularly in this chapter, is broader than reference to those who hold a position in the university and the occupation. Instead it draws on Petersen's (2007) definition which refers to the process through which identity is developed, negotiated and enacted as one gets an academic research qualification or a doctorate.

Alys: [Referring to my headings] Tell me a bit more about 'teacher or academic'

Paula: This is part of my struggle of identity; the first is the tension between middle-class and working-class identity; and then a theme is emerging about being an academic – whatever that is. I feel like I should be an academic, but actually I am a second order practitioner in my day to day activities. That is influenced by what we have to do in ITE. Hence there are two separate discussions about identity. They are big dilemmas. I see being a lecturer in a university as more than being a teacher of teachers. I think we should all be involved in academic endeavour. Is my position the same as someone who is a senior lecturer at X university in which they are required to



have PhD? There are notions about equity and status. This is why I have always talked about student teachers as practitioner researchers; I was talking about this in 2010. This is wrapped up in the status that the faculty affords research and in how much time they give us for scholarly activity in our workload planning. There needs to be a commitment on behalf of the faculty if they want us to be researchers. If we continue to be driven by technical rationalism – we will /can never be more than second order practitioners. When I challenge this, people look at me as though I am mad... 'What are you interested in research for?' 'You don't have to do this'. For me the doctorate is the pinnacle of my academic achievements..... The PhD is really bound up with who I am and that is bound up in recognition. My identity, and my sense of self has become completely bound up in the doctorate.

Since starting work at the university, I no longer feel that I am a teacher, or even a teacher of teachers, but nor do I see myself as an academic. Moreover, I do not seem to share the values and beliefs of either category of my peers; one group, the larger group in my faculty, see themselves as teachers of teachers, who resist, or at least seem to resist, the intellectualisation of teacher education; and the other, almost a distinct group, who see themselves as academic researchers, who see this as an integral and principal part of their role. This was having a profound impact on my identity as a teacher educator or academic. For a time, I felt I had to choose, or at least I was being forced to choose.

With academic research activity for teacher educators under heavy scrutiny in almost all higher educational institutions in England, most faculties of teacher education want teacher educators who are 'expert practitioners, who can deliver research-informed teaching or possibly develop a research profile' (Ellis *et al*, 2012, p.692).

This renders the teacher educator as a difficult or troublesome category of academic, which is either a hybrid of, or exception to practice and research (Ibid.). But as Swennen, Jones and Volman (2010) suggested, the identity of the teacher educator, as for all identities, develops within the community of teacher education. In an early entry in my field notes it is clear that I am wrestling with my sense of identity as an academic. This has been a constant and enduring source of personal and professional dilemma.

*'At the Crossroads' Conference: This was an interesting conference that brought together ideas about teacher education. Made me think about the main roles and responsibilities I undertake as a teacher educator – what do I spend most of my time doing? What is my identity as a teacher educator? Teacher? Researcher? Manager? Academic? How do my students see me? (FN: July 2012).*

Forming my own academic identity has been problematic. I think this is, in part, due to my own construction of what an academic is; the 'ideal' academic in my mind is someone who spends their time engaged in 'being an academic'; they are professional thinkers and communicators who enjoy reading scholarly books and journals, writing, talking with other academics, challenging grand theory for pleasure as well as part of their profession – not someone like me who has to wrestle for academic time both at home and at work. The expectations of my role as a teacher educator is that I have a large teaching commitment, which means I can commit less time to genuine scholarly activity; as a consequence, it is taking much longer for me to assume the identity of an academic.

Alys: Your doctorate presents something really rich and powerful. Tell me what the doctorate means to you...

Paula: It has become and is representative of my struggle for recognition. I want to be recognised as equal. The thesis is part of the struggle..... Life as a working-class woman, feels like a struggle. It is a struggle because .... not because I feel harshly treated or anything like that.... My husband and I have come to the conclusion that when life gets hard I turn to education. Is this psychological capital? So when my mum met my step-dad and things got rough for a while, my grandad died, my mum got depressed and I got embroiled in all of that..... What did I do - I got eight GCEs. When work life became unimportant, for example, when working with all those middle-class women what did I do - I went off to do a degree. When I think that life at the university is boring and dull because of the technical rationalism.... what do I do? I put myself through a doctorate. Why would I do that? - there is nothing in it for me.

Alys: If you go back to your struggle for recognition ... What you are reflecting on in this conversation is the power of education to get you through struggles.

Paula: ..... For me education is about distancing/detaching myself from situations. It is about finding a sense of belonging. That's important. It is about finding a space to belong legitimately. The thesis...engaging with my critical theoretical friends was to me like finding a space in which I am legitimate. (Collaborative narrative: February 2017)

In a later conversation

Alys: Do you think that [the PhD as a means of recognition] was there from the start or is that what it has become? Why did you start?

Paula: I can remember an early conversation we had...I think I said it quite flippantly.... I am not so worried about the outcome I just want to be 'cleverer'. It is about having something that you can draw on to make you feel a sense of belonging, a sense of recognition. I guess it is capital – cultural capital.

Alys: I think you need to explore that. All of us will go into the process for different reasons. ....Like you I wanted the process of learning. I haven't felt the need to have it for recognition. What is going to happen when you get it?

Paula: I don't know .....all I can imagine now is the fear of not getting it. I sometimes wake up feeling sick.... who am I? who do I see myself as?..... someone who has achieved a doctorate, will I then be equal to my middle-class peers?

Alys: I don't ever remember feeling like I would not get it [the doctorate]

The difference between the way we, Alys and I, anticipate the outcomes of doctoral study is revealing, and serves to exemplify the differences in social and cultural identity. Of course, this may be Alys' personal sentiment, but this is something that I often observe as emblematic of middle-class privilege; a knowledge and a self-assuredness that embodies a sense of entitlement. For people like me, from the working-class, who did not come into adulthood with given assurances and expectations - the dominant culture misrecognises our history, so we have had to work extra hard. I am not suggesting that there is a dichotomy; that middle-class people have an easy life, and working-class people have a hard life; that would be an over-simplification, but there is a difference between the attitudes of middle-class and working-class people that the middle-class do not even recognise or indeed can legitimise.

Paula: For me it is a constant...I think that is part of the illegitimacy of being a 'working-class academic'. Somebody

still might say....'you think this is good enough to be worthy of a doctorate. Who do you think you are?'. Despite all the encouragement and support I have had from you and [my other supervisor] – I still think there is a chance I will never get there. Then there is a part of me that says so what....in the meantime you have read all those books...met all of those wonderful academics, had all of those lovely conversations. I have no idea what comes after; identity is caught up with this now – everyone knows I am doing it – and I might not succeed. That is where my research started...I really wanted to examine why I was undertaking higher academic qualification.

Alys: It is all about your identity; and the structures in which you position yourself (Collaborative narrative: May 2017).

If only it was that simple. The working-class do not position themselves, they are often positioned as illustrated in the examples below.

Alys: I want this [the thesis] to be something really important for you. I know you have really struggled with coming into the autobiographical paradigm ...how much of yourself you want to expose.

Paula: It's about starting something that will bring about change.

Alys: The purpose of you doing this is, is that you want to start people thinking about the impact of class. And the only way you can do this is about opening up and baring your history. The background, and the current context is to allow people to see it [the class experience] in a different way.

Paula: It's about education being more than cognition...it is about .....acknowledging the affective dimension of being a learner. It is about acknowledging that something, like the doctorate, is easier to give up than carry on.

Alys: I like that. I wrote as you were talking [showing her notes] 'education: struggle and saviour'. Because that is what it is, isn't it? It is those dual things. So the thesis is your exploration of the affective dimension of being in education.....and the impact that that can have, and you are telling that story as a working-class woman.

Paula: Part of my argument is that it is harder to be a learner if you are working-class Because you haven't got the economic, social, cultural and emotional capital. In my last review there was an element of a lack of emotional capital revealed in that meeting. I suspect that someone with more cultural, social and economic capital would have dealt with that in a much more emotionally controlled way.

Alys: But the whole point of this [the thesis] is that if you had come from a different background, and if you were more controlled, none of these exciting things would be happening now. You would have a really controlled safe doctorate, whereas the whole point of your thesis is that you are reaching into some really important emotional areas (Collaborative narrative: February, 2017).

The legacy of a working-class childhood is the shame of being a misfit; the feeling of not being good enough, clever enough, to succeed and this is ever more extant in the academic field. Like many 'miraculés' I identify with the intellectual values of the system, whilst at the same time recognising that the academy is still a source of reproduction of an unjust distribution of symbolic capital (Moi, 1991). This means that on the one hand, I am proud to be part of an intellectual community, whilst at the same time feel ashamed of the elitist practices.

Churchill and Sanders (2007) identified five generic motives for embarking on a PhD: career development, lack of current job satisfaction, a personal agenda, research as politics, and drifting in. Brailsford (2010), based on his small study of eleven PhD graduates, found that desire to start, and indeed complete a PhD, was driven by a strong commitment to the dissertation topic itself, coupled with a desire to reach the summit of academic achievement: participants failed to express an overt intention to

engage in doctoral study related to their sense of identity. Leonard, Becker and Coate (2005) found in their study, that the main motivation of doctoral students was to prove themselves, and this featured for both personal development, and training and qualification motives. For my own motives, I would suggest that undertaking a PhD went beyond these incentives – it was concomitant with recognition and belonging – this is explored in more detail the next chapter.

## **Becoming middle-class?**

The narrative data above begins to tell the story of a teacher educator in turmoil, struggling with notions of self and identity which are founded on a strong sense of justice which harks back to being raised in disadvantage. This is the moral significance of class (Sayer, 2005). Like most people I construct my identity intersubjectively. So my identity is formed, at least in part, by those with whom I interact: my husband, my friends, my students, my colleagues, and how I negotiate my interactions with them is based on how I have learnt to see myself through others' eyes. There are inconsistencies between how I see myself and how others see me. As Alys pointed out in our conversation about my colleagues, the students see me as a reasonably confident white middle-class woman. However, my sense of self formed in childhood is so fragile that I do not see this about myself, and sometimes I perceive that others see the working-class inferiorities too. The *habitus clivé* has offered me a way of reconciling feelings of illegitimacy in the academy and has forced me to acknowledge, that despite my resistance, I have **become** middle-class.

The notion of 'becoming' suggests a change over time, movement from one state of being to another, where the latter is normally considered better than the former (Barnacle, 2005). I cannot deny that my lifestyle is better than had I remained working-class but I now realise that it is only me who has refused to abandon my working-class identity – this has been a moment of illumination.

Through the process of entering the third space where something new is generated from the process of internalising distinctive structures (Bhabha, 1994) I now feel better able to reconcile my habitus (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016) as being middle-class with working-class origins; one which affords the respect due to someone who is 'une miraculée'. And whilst I operate mostly in the middle-class field I choose not to abandon my originary field but instead to acknowledge and be proud of my origins. This has been a humbling experience.

Writing auto/biographically in the doctorate has played a significant role in helping me to reconcile my identity with my 'self'. I feel that for the first time I have a legitimate place in society as a successful educated woman from a working-class background. It has brought about a change of self-identity. I am happy to accept that I am no longer working-class, so I am now going to call myself an academic from the working-class as this term recognises both my primary habitus and upward class transition.

Undertaking the PhD has proved to be such an important and integral part of my 'becoming' that I have dedicated a complete chapter to the impact that this has had on me – personally and professionally.



## Chapter 9: The PhD and me: We make the road by walking<sup>9</sup>



We make the road by walking  
Charlie and me, walking the land and thinking (2016).

This chapter draws on both phase 2 and phase 3 of the empirical narrative. In a layered account (Ronai, 1995) which layers my memories and reflections; my field notes and reflective diary; my conversations with Alys in collaborative narrative, and my analysis – all demarcated by the different fonts previously used which should feel familiar to the reader. It explores the PhD experience from the perspective of an academic from the working-class. I share my reflections and analysis on the cognitive, emotional and social experience of undertaking the PhD.

It is research within the research: an attempt for me to explore my own participation with the doctoral process and the impact it has had on me, on becoming an academic,

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<sup>9</sup> The title of an inspirational text by Horton and Freire (1990)

during the academic activity itself. It acknowledges that the process of writing a thesis is not merely cognitive and a disembodied activity removed from questions of gender and class. It is anticipated that this chapter specifically will contribute to the understanding of the emotional politics of embarking on doctoral research. It is a piece of revolutionary writing that disrupts the discourse of both middle-class academic writing insofar that it is about the personal and the emotional, but it also challenges the notion of working-class writing of the bildungsroman. In this space my life and work entwine and I think this makes the research distinctive.

It is a chapter of hope and promise; about finding a sense of belonging; about moving forward. It represents an undertaking to examine the emergence of my identity as an academic, and to highlight the emotions involved in engaging in doctoral research. I hope to extend the understanding of the mundane, but emotional, everyday practices that underpin doctoral work as it is the small things that are often occupied with meaning at a micro level.

*I am struggling emotionally. Undertaking a doctorate is complex, emotionally difficult and messy. It has positioned me in a liminal space; a space where I am moving between teacher educator and academic; I no longer feel like a teacher of teachers but have not yet acquired the full legitimate recognition of an academic. (RD: December, 2016).*

## **Finding the road**

I work four days a week within the institution in which I am undertaking my doctorate. Like most universities there is an expectation for lecturers to teach and have a research profile; however as yet it is not a requirement for us all to undertake a PhD. This is important because it illustrates my own agency in the process, but it also serves to show the structural and

organisational barriers. With an 80 per cent teaching workload finding time to engage in research activity is challenging and it comes at an emotional, financial and social cost.

I put in my proposal for my doctorate in 2011. As I have already explained, by that time I had worked for the university for about 4 years, and was becoming somewhat disillusioned with the direction of teacher education in England was going. I needed a way of challenging what seemed to me hegemonic practices within the institution. I also had questions and theories about the nature of the agentic power of education that I wanted to explore. As I explained in chapter one - the intention at the inception of my research study was to examine the agentic power of post-graduate education on in-service teachers. At the time the subject was relevant in light of the changing policy landscape for teachers' professional development. However, driving the research were personal values and beliefs that revealed themselves to my supervisor in an early discussion.

*I had an interesting conversation with my supervisor today; when I was explaining my rationale for my research she challenged me on why I wanted to ask my participants about their social class. I told her about my experiences and shared with her that I come from a working-class background and as such I thought class was relevant in whether teachers may or may not engage in postgraduate work. (FN. February 2012)*

This conversation was a turning point in my doctoral adventure as it made me challenge my assumptions by

looking at my epistemological and ontological assumptions - and for this I had to return to my past. I needed to make myself more aware of how I was a subject of history. As I began to explore my auto/biography and share this with my supervisors - a story of 'une miraculée' was exposed and they encouraged me to explore this at a deeper level. I resisted this at first, as I could not see the relevance to my research question, and I did not see my own experiences of growing up as being worthy of research. But as the research evolved I began to see how who I am is a result of who I was. Moreover, as my research developed, the methodology now seemed to be grounded in my critical and feminist epistemology insofar that it was driven by my beliefs, values, dispositions (my habitus) formed in childhood, and my curiosity about the complexity of people's lives (including my own).

It is important not to lose sight that whilst for the professional middle-class, higher education is seen as the standard expectation - 'something within the grasp of all their children', among the working-classes higher education remains 'an exceptional experience' (Scott, in Plummer, 2000, p. 39); this makes the achievement of this doctorate even more meaningful to me. It is something truly special.

Of course, the bound doctorate has to be a finite goal for a doctoral study. But for me the doctorate means so much more - it represents a defiant challenge to the middle-class. This is a woman from the working-class, where most of the girls went off to work in Woolworth's. Despite my disadvantage I am as good as you. It has been a way of disrupting the dominant discourse about the

meritocracy of education and class transition.  
Successful achievement of the award Doctor of Philosophy  
will also bring with it the recognition I so desire.

The use of a metaphor to explore the doctoral process is not new; many of the authors in Brown (2009) offer metaphors for their doctoral experience. For example, Chapman Hoult uses a gardening analogy 'The sapling is fragile and needs space to breathe and grow' (Chapman Hoult, 2009a, p.19); and Haynes (2009) explores 'gestation and birthing' as a metaphor for the 'tumultuous and at times unpredictable life cycle of knowledge creation' (Haynes, 2009, p. 27). Like my own analogy, the dominant metaphor of a PhD thesis is that of the journey. The sub-text of which is that the journey implies a known start and a known destination, and that the terrain to be covered can be mapped out in advance (McCulloch, 2013). And like McCulloch (Ibid.) I found that this is much too simple a metaphor, as it failed to sufficiently take account of the doctorate's complexity, the uncertainty involved, the extent to which research involves the unknown, the fact that multiple actors are involved and the emotional ups and downs of the experience. So in my analogy, the journey became an adventure, where at the end an event for the select few was to be found. Its whereabouts is not originally known, but it involves a long journey, which presents a series of challenges along the way. As McCulloch (2013) suggests, the object being sought through the doctoral quest may take a variety of forms. but for me, it involved being accepted by a 'special' or elite group of people.

And so began an adventure, not only in auto/biographical research methods, but also into my 'self'. Like any adventure my experience has been full of twists, turns and false starts that are best described through analogy. In my diary I wrote of an adventure.

## **The adventure**

*The 'invitation' to do a PhD was like hearing about an event  
for which there is only a limited number of invitations. Of*

course everyone wants to go, but the only way to get there was to earn your right to an invitation. I knew it would be harder for me because I had less capital than some of the others who were also trying to attend but that did not put me off. I had to try, especially when I heard who else was going to be there. I had no idea where to start so I asked some people who had been to one of these events before. They gave me some sound advice and with their help and support I gained an invitation.

However, despite all their help, the person who had given me the invitation was unable to give me an address or any directions, but set me off on the path with a cheery wave saying 'good luck you will know you are there when you get there'. In 2011, I set off along a road, buoyed up by this person's optimism, and full of confidence and hope that I would find the destination.

At first the pathway was well-lit and clear, and I met some fantastic friends, men and mostly women like me who had travelled a similar path, who shared their stories of success with me; this gave me confidence that I would make it.

But then disaster. I met someone who kindly and gently but very firmly told me that I was going the wrong way and if I continued this way I was destined to fail. Should I give up or find another way? I decided to go on but change my route. However, this path was dark and was so densely covered in weeds and brambles that I had to pick my way through. I became confused, I stumbled, I tripped, and got lost.

It took a while but eventually I found a familiar face, someone I recognised, who, despite the fact we did not speak the same language managed to direct me to a path, not the same path. This path looked darker and more foreboding, it was less fertile and more physically and emotionally demanding than the one before. I became hesitant or maybe even reluctant.

But there was only one way for me to go: forward. This time I was more cautious, making tentative steps, stopping every now and again to check with a friendly 'someone' to see if I was still heading in the right direction; sometimes, despite their earnest reassurances, I still doubted what they were saying.

There were traps along the way; some of them really hurt emotionally and mentally. At times I became overwhelmed by the enormity of the journey.... would I ever get there? Often I felt like giving up, turning around and going 'home'. But, by now I had lost sight of that too. I was 'nowhere at home' [Overall, 1995]. So I pushed forward. Every now and again I would find a clue telling me how to get to the location of the event, and I would follow this route either to find that I had gone down a blind alley so I had to turn back; or that it had taken me in the wrong direction again. But sometimes it enabled me to make some progress which gave me both courage and hope.

Every now and again I would pass through a community of well-wishers who would fill me with enough hope and optimism to carry me forward. Sometimes I would see light

only to turn a corner and lose sight of it, or to find someone, bigger and stronger than me, blocking the way; these interactions were particularly damaging to my self-confidence; perhaps I was getting above myself, maybe I should just give up and find happiness where I am? Feeling battle worn and dejected, I turned a corner; suddenly something, I don't know what, told me I was a step closer and I should carry on.

As the expedition continued there were more people who I chatted with along the way, who would offer advice and support, that would motivate me all over again; and of course there were some who tried to help, but who just left me even more perplexed. I would still lose sight of the road every now and again, stumbling through the undergrowth; seemingly making a new road as I went, maybe contributing to new knowledge or leaving a trail of confusion behind me. Occasionally, I looked back on my travels and recognised how far I had come, but at other times I felt that despite all my efforts I had made no progress along the road at all. Then I remember meeting someone who knew the landscape really well who reassured me that I was going in the right direction and that I would get there. They made suggestions to help me and even carried my bag for a while; at least long enough for me to recover emotionally and physically.

And then I saw it, my adventure over – I was nearly there. Exhausted, I had a final barrier to overcome; it presented itself earlier than expected, but I was determined to get over it, even if in all honesty, I had nothing left to give. The brick wall was there for a reason. Although it felt as if it was there to



keep me out, in hindsight I think it was there to give me a chance to show how badly I wanted to get to the end. I clambered, I got over but I landed heavily and was deeply bruised.

Someone told me I should take a rest and recover. What did they know about me? I was frightened that if I lay there at the bottom of the wall for too long I would never get up. Winded and bruised I got up, staggered back; looked at how close I was; I stumbled and tripped and then gathered momentum – someone had grabbed my arm, and was gently taking me forward, reassuring me that I could, and would, get there. So on I went; sometimes hesitantly, at other times re-energised and optimistic and without any doubt.

Despite all the struggles, mentally and emotionally I have suffered, I now know that the person at the beginning of the journey was right; I would know the place when I got there. But as I stand at the entrance, I am still not sure they will let me in despite the obstacles I have overcome to get here, all I can do is knock and wait. I truly feel that I have made the road by walking. (RD September 2017).

Expressed in this analogy is my ambition to transgress the space in order to gain entry into an elite club. The notion of completion of a quest suggests the acquisition of something special that may be out of reach for the 'likes of us'. Also revealed is the feeling of inferiority, anxiety and doubt indicative of the embodied feeling of being positioned as not good enough and misrecognised (Honneth, 2007) all my life. But importantly the story reveals how intersubjective, loving relationships have enabled me to discover and find the way; to find a sense of inner strength that I did not have before; to find a new sense of self.

## Becoming an academic

How can I come to know how to act, speak, think, write and feel as an academic? In this context, I am using the term of academic in its broadest sense, i.e. the process through which an academic identity is developed, negotiated and enacted as one gets an academic research qualification (Petersen, 2007) rather than the position of an academic within a university.

As I have argued previously, 'becoming' suggests movement from one state of being to another, where the latter is normally considered better than the former (Barnacle, 2005). Obtaining a higher degree is commonly perceived as gaining moral worth and honour (Reay, 2004), and this is particularly so for working-class women (Skeggs, 1997). For me, becoming a Doctor of Philosophy is more than merely the acquisition of knowledge, or even being able to demonstrate research skills and critical thinking, it is a lived experience in which the research will be inhabited as part of my professional life; personally and temporally (Barnacle, 2004). For me, it is 'the orientation of one's desire toward wisdom' (Barnacle, 2005, p.182). Undertaking this doctorate is not merely a means to an end, the 'done thing', an expectation of employment, or a means of gaining external recognition to further a career trajectory, or about 'playing the game'; it is about so much more.

*It is no surprise that assuming an academic identity is proving to be problematic; my working-class background has ill-prepared me for thinking of myself as an academic. I still feel guilty on a working day to be reading and writing. My own construction of the academic-self calls upon an imagined 'ideal' academic who spends time engaged in the doing of the academic—reading, writing, thinking, discussing. But for me this 'ideal' academic is beyond reach, its achievement frustrated by the demands of numerous tasks which make up my job as a teacher of teachers which do not 'make up' the academic. (RD: July 2016)*

Bryant and Jaworski (2015) suggested that women face a number of additional challenges when engaging in doctoral study; including feeling excluded, unsupported and marginalised in academic cultures. Indeed, some of the least supportive comments have come from my colleagues

*'At least you have time to do something for yourself [the doctorate]. I don't have time to do anything other than work'. I feel upset that this colleague [white middle-class man] was implying that I am not working as hard as they are because I have time to undertake a PhD. Don't they realise that I do this on top of my day job or are they suggesting their day job is harder than mine? (RD: September 2015)*

### **The pleasure....**

Despite the struggles associated with being a doctoral student, particularly someone who is trying to undertake this level of study alongside full-time work as a teacher educator, there have been many times when I have felt excitement, happiness, and satisfaction; when I began to feel that I may be making a contribution to the academic field.

*After they had seen me present at the conference, I was privileged to be invited by a colleague to speak to a group of mature students – all working as teachers in post-compulsory education participating on the BA in Lifelong Learning. I presented my paper called 'Standing on the edge' which attempted to set out how being an educated working-class woman has left me with a feeling of standing on the edge in academia. I also spoke of writing autobiographically, including the pleasure and pain. The presentation went well and the conversation after was stimulating. It was*

interesting for me to note that many of these students were also working-class, and this was the first chance they had had to really think about their own [classed] experiences and they felt they were more able to do that in relation to mine. This was not only an empowering but also a validating experience. For the first time I realised that my auto/biography could make a contribution to research. (RD April, 2016).

Furthermore, the doctoral process has nourished and re-energised me epistemologically, over the years.

Thank goodness for rare days like this [a study day] when I can think about education rather than do admin. This shift to school-based teacher education is really worrying me. (RD: November 2013).

I have found a rare study day. The more I read in support of my doctorate the more passionate I become about resisting technical rationalism...I seem more resistant to these hegemonic practices than some of my colleagues. Does this have anything to do with being working-class? If so what? I need to explore this further. (RD: March 2014)

The act of researching for this thesis has propelled me out of my ontological and epistemological inertia. It has given me a sense of purpose when all seems to be lost in initial teacher education. I have read a vast amount, much of which has not even made it into the thesis but which has had a huge impact on who I am as a teacher educator. Firstly, it has solidified my concerns about politics in education and has introduced

me to an intellectual community of like-minded scholars. Mercifully, I have learned that there are academics everywhere questioning their practice and the boundaries of our discipline. It has also become a way of reconnecting with what I think is real and true in education. (RD: July 2016)

When I started my PhD it coincided with a change of government and a change of ideology across all sectors of education, and in particular initial teacher education (ITE). I was feeling particularly pessimistic about the future of ITE, in particular the drive towards school-based teacher training. Furthermore, the increase of neoliberal technical rationalist approaches in the faculty, to meet the OfSTED agenda, were inconsistent with my own beliefs about higher education's role in developing emerging teachers. I found myself in not only a critical, but also a rather negative frame of mind. I recognised how external power structures were forcing the Faculty Management Team to make some very difficult and I would argue hegemonic decisions. I felt angry about the position we [as a faculty] were in. Furthermore, I felt impotent to effect any change because of the culture of silence and institutional individualisation (Honneth, 2007) that prevented us, as individuals, from sharing our experiences and frustrations. There seemed to be no safe place to be the voice of dissent. Whenever I raised issues in meetings I was put down, politely of course, indicating to me and others that my contributions were untenable. I became complacent and lethargic, although not compliant, as I felt I lacked any sense of agency, hence the reference to ontological and epistemological inertia. I knew I needed to find a way to reconnect to who I was as a teacher educator, intellectually and viscerally; to confront myself.

I have just realised that a commitment to time spent thinking and writing (actually doing research) is also enhancing my teaching. My conversations with others and my 'self' has helped me identify the tensions within which I work; which means that I am able constantly to reappraise the purpose of my teaching. So despite the challenges to find time to write, and the moments of fear, inadequacy and failure, undertaking the research is part of the care of the self. It has provided a space where I have crystalised my ideas; understood my desires to be a scholar; learnt to feel less guilty (about everything) and just be me. In this way the auto/biographical doctorate is providing me with a sense of personal and intellectual agency. (RD, June, 2016).

In my more optimistic moments I am glad I decided against a 'standard social science research project' because it would have denied me the contradictions between my experiences, my consciousness and theory that I have so much enjoyed.

I am beginning to feel that I own this research....and I am worthy of a PhD. My research has become more about me. The PhD is in itself about a process of becoming. As I look at my notes and reflections it reflects a changing identity. Whilst I am still a teacher educator, I can see an emerging sense of identity as a researcher. As I have read I have changed. As I write I change. This change means I am learning. While it is good for me, it is a destabilising experience. I need to find time to think about the impact of taking a doctorate on my professional life and identity (FN: April 2014).

## ..... And now the pain

My doctoral experience, like that of many others for example, Chapman Hoult (2009a) and Haynes (2009) has been filled with tensions, challenges and moments of intense isolation.

I have spent many sleepless hours regretting my decision to undertake the PhD and in particular to write autobiographically. Writing a doctorate in this genre has left me doubly exposed. Particularly as I began to share my research with others at conferences, feelings of vulnerability and humility crept in. Internalised feelings of oppression, (Pheterson, 1986) inferiority and resignation resurfaced.

Whilst most of the time academics are sympathetic to emergent academics - there are pockets of superiority and arrogance, of intellectual or, dare I say, elitist gatekeeping.

(European conference) I read an extract from my doctoral research as it existed at that point. [The auto/biographical content (which is clearly illustrated in this thesis) would make anyone feel slightly exposed]. At this point the 'Reader' as I will call her detected a hole in my research - her challenge was relentless. Thankfully some experienced academics in the room came to my rescue - I was truly grateful for their support. Later, I cried a lot! For the first time I feel like giving up! I feel so unintelligent, so vulnerable, so exposed but mostly so inferior. (RD March 2016).

I always feel vulnerable in these settings [a conference]. Not because of my gender but always because of my class..... despite working within a university for 10 years I always feel illegitimate, like I am here under false pretences. I feel people

can sense the lack of social, cultural and educational capital. Rather than feel proud that I am here by my own virtue, I tell myself that is good for me. I present in a different way than most of the other presenters had presented – surprisingly I present timidly... (RD March 2016).

As Honneth (2007) contended, when individuals encounter each other in society they have the expectation that they will reciprocally recognise each other's fundamental needs. This experience represented a situation where my notions of justice were violated. As a new academic I had anticipated a critique but not a personal attack. In this instance of disrespect which, I would argue is also an illustration of Bourdieu's (1994) concept of symbolic violence, I was being structurally excluded from the possession of certain rights. This brought with it a loss of self-confidence in my ability to ever be able to reside in the academic field. Strangely enough, these feelings of vulnerability increased as I got closer to completion; although I now recognise it is more common than I thought (Chapman Houlst, 2009a).

My anxieties and fears about writing, particularly, for an academic audience has meant that the process has become particularly painful ....and characterised by procrastination. As I write I fear the 'the other' saying that this is not good enough. I have often perceived genuine constructive critique being 'negative', more so in the case of auto/biography because the experience of writing about the self is so visceral. (RD. November, 2016).

[Writing about study leave] The weight of responsibility is overwhelming – what if I do not finish in time; what if it is no good. This puts me at further risk of exposure and disrespect. There is a distinct tension – I feel that reading



and writing is not work, yet as an academic it is a valued component of what I do. And it is also what I am fighting for in education – in which teachers are also scholars not merely practitioners (RD: November 2016).

The beautiful risk of education; Isn't this what the PhD is? Risky? Everyone knows I am writing my thesis and everyone is asking how I have done. Now I have to tell everyone that it is not good enough to proceed. I think this is more difficult to acknowledge as a working-class person, it just supports the you are 'not one of us ideology' (RD: January 2017).

Despite all this, I am here nearly at the end of my adventure. It has taken me into the unknown at times, but has provided a rare opportunity to raise questions about my assumptions, values and beliefs; and to examine the structural conditions that give rise to discomfort and disbelief in the self as a working-class woman from a marginal position. The doctorate has been an important source of intellectual and emotional growth. Despite my continued anxieties, the anticipated satisfaction at completing an esteemed project, to make an original contribution to knowledge in my chosen field, my community and to my profession, I am sure will be worth it.

Or as Brookfield argues 'Becoming aware of the implicit assumptions that frame how we think and act is one of the most challenging intellectual puzzles we face in our lives (Brookfield, 1995, p.2).

There is now a huge sense of working-class honour bound up with gaining the doctorate. And the question of honour

is fragile for those who live on the margins of academic life. The internalised oppression (Pheterson, 1986) of being disadvantaged has left me with deep feelings of insecurity that go right back to childhood. There is always a sense that I might get it wrong... and that it will never be good enough to meet the expectations of the intellectual field. The fear of disappointing significant others in my research relationship was almost overwhelming.

It is apparent to me that engaging with the doctorate is having a positive impact on both my personal and professional identity. In my more optimistic moments, I am able to recognise that I am making a contribution to the academic community that is valuable and worthwhile, which is having a positive effect on my self-esteem (Honneth, 1995, 2007). Through being recognised as someone who can contribute positively to the shared projects of the community, in this context an academic community, is providing the antidote to the misrecognition and disrespect (Ibid) sometimes shown to me as a teacher educator. Engaging in doctoral study is enabling me to gain a sense of self-respect as I begin to recognise that, despite my social, cultural and economic disadvantage, through education, I am still able to enter an elite club, which is usually only accessible to the middle-class. Furthermore, through exercising a feminist epistemology, I have been able to recognise the disconnect between how I feel about how others see me (confident and competent) and how I actually feel inside (uncertain and incompetent), and I have been able to use this to bring about a slight shift in my sense of self.

One of the significant contributing factors to this growth in self-esteem is that five years ago, I joined a network of scholars working within the auto/biographical paradigm. Over time I have moved from the periphery of the network to a more central position in which I am aware that others have respect for me as an emerging researcher. Through the intersubjective recognition of my contributions to the research network, I have been able to regard myself as equal to other members of the group. I have become part of a community of scholars who recognise me as a distinct

individual with particular traits and abilities that contribute positively to the shared projects of that community (Honneth, 1995) which brings with it a sense of legitimacy. However, even though I have navigated middle-class spheres there is a layer of my 'self' that has remained permanent. Despite my success, I still feel like an academic tourist – a visitor in the academic field, in which I have a transient temporary position, which seems to me to be very different from being indigenous and being at one with the land.

## **Research relationships – love, rights, and solidarity**

As first I entered the academic community, what for me was a completely new cultural space with people who seemed to have a lot more capital than me, my self-esteem (Honneth, 1995) was very fragile as the entry below exemplifies.

*(Conference: Constructing Continuity and Change). I am now entering a cultural space that is very frightening? whilst I am intensely proud and grateful to Alys.... why did I let her convince me to do this? who am I to share my thoughts about the research process – I am merely a novice. It was interesting (and perhaps a little disappointing) that after our presentation some members of the 'audience' were more interested in our relationship than the paper itself (FN: May 2012).*

Central to my successful completion of the doctorate has been the relationship with my research supervisors. There are still relatively few texts that explore supervisory relationships, indeed 'practices of supervision and scholarship remain under-scrutinized both in university settings and in academic writing' (Bryant and Jaworski, 2015, p.3). Bryant and Jaworski's text (2015) specifically explores the relationship between women supervising and writing doctoral thesis.

The 'traditional' doctoral student is typically seen as white, male, young, and middle-class (Petersen, 2014), and in more traditional models of supervision the student has been seen as an apprentice or protégé. But as Green (2005) stated 'Doctoral education is as much about identity formation as it is about knowledge production' (Green, 2005, p.153 in Petersen, 2007) and ' 'good supervision' takes into account our humanness, our emotions and values' (Bryant and Jaworski, 2015, p.11).

Fortunately for me, both supervisors have been keen to support me in going beyond the process of engaging in research and writing a doctorate per se; instead focusing on how the self is being (re)constituted and negotiated in the process (Petersen, 2014). As Petersen (2014) stated, I have found the supervisory relationship to be a reiterative practice in recognising, repeating, and recontextualising subjectivity and intersubjectivity. This has meant the experience has gone beyond a merely cognitive experience, to one that has seen the process of ongoing negotiation of self and identity as equally important. This has been evident from the outset and has resulted in an intellectually productive, as well as an emotional experience. Right from the outset I was encouraged by both of my supervisors to begin to form an academic identity through engagement in conference presentations; this was particularly important in developing a more positive relationship to my identity as an academic.

The doctoral pathway is where the emotional histories of both candidate and supervisor are lived and relived in fragmented moments during a range of doctoral study spaces' (Bryant and Jaworski, 2015, p. 23).

Whilst it is important to acknowledge that this doctoral relationship occurs within the confines of a neoliberal university setting, which generally necessitates the denial of emotions in the process of achievement if not indeed the learning process itself, the meetings with my supervisors have, over the years, involved surprise, passion, disappointment and euphoria; all of which have provided emotional and intellectual sustenance during the long marathon of the PhD. Through their love and

recognition (Honneth, 1995), I have learnt, or am at least beginning to learn, to have trust in myself; and to see myself as worthy of this doctorate and my position in the academy. I am convinced that the recognition I have acquired from the solid social bonds of the supervisory relationship/s and the confidence it has provided, has enabled me to flourish in my own learning.

The relationships with my supervisors have been crucial to my survival in very different ways; but I feel both relationships are borne out of intersubjective love, rights and solidarity (Honneth, 1995). The fact that we value each other's' qualities despite the differences between us in terms of class and gender has made me feel valued and accepted for who I am. This is in contrast to how I feel in other areas of the faculty, in which I believe I can only achieve relational value, belongingness, or acceptance by behaving inconsistently with my natural inclinations. Thus, being valued as a person has led to a more secure, stable, and self-esteem (Honneth, 1995).

In particular, my supervisors have supported me with encouragement, with assurances that I'd made a good decision in deciding to pursue the Ph.D. in the first place, but more importantly to take the brave step to write autobiographically, they have given me courage. My supervisors' expertise and knowledge has been instrumental in my successful completion, especially in the writing, of the thesis.

However, like any long-term relationship, the supervisory relationship is complex: it is inevitably, and properly, challenging at times. The relationship involves a high degree of emotional involvement on behalf of both the student and supervisor (Bryant and Jaworski, 2015). Based on reason alone, it is not difficult to deduce that the magnitude of a student's investment in the PhD will produce some strong emotions (Ibid.) and I contend that this is even more apparent in auto/biographical work. Some of our exchanges have inevitably aroused feelings on both sides.

I have just realised I have not seen Alys in ages. I really miss her provocations.... how can I contact her when she is so busy in her new role? (RD: September, 2016).

It was so good to see Alys today. We both acknowledged our part in the breakdown of communication and within a matter of moments things had got back to where they were. Within 10 minutes we were both raving about how I was going to take my doctorate forward. (RD: February 2017).

In the course of our discussions, Alys and I sometimes had difficult conversations. I have referred to a very difficult conversation in chapter eight, but it was just one of many.

Alys: The nature of your thesis is more difficult for the supervisory relationships. Because it is autobiographical the real challenge, particularly in the review meetings, is that you don't always listen to us. You don't listen to all the positive stuff... you are waiting for us to be critical....and that is all you hear. Because it is so close to you....I know it must feel almost like a personal attack on you.

Paula: Sometimes it does. I know we hold different perspectives on lots of things. There has been provocation.....in challenging my thinking and my beliefs that I have found difficult at times (Collaborative Narrative: June 2017)

In a later conversation, Alys shares with me her sense of responsibility as a supervisor.

Alys: That is why this is a powerful thesis. It is more than just about you...this is the field you are exploring, and this is why I am clinging onto this themes idea. That is what academia,.....the wider world,

needs to understand.....these bigger themes and how they impact. Maybe it is about education being a tool for social justice.

Paula: But this research would have been impoverished if we had not had these conversations which is why I came to the idea of the collaborative narrative approach.

Alys: Now is a time to enjoy what you are writing about.

Paula: The thing is I lack confidence so much that when I am writing, I feel that, even at this stage, I am not entitled to my own voice.

Alys: The process of a doctoral thesis is very individual and as supervisors we know our students really well. We have such a huge undertaking and responsibility to our students. The role of the supervisor is to take you to a point in which you are the expert, and I have felt that in you for ages.... but you have to be the expert. No matter what your examiners bring with them...they have not done the research in that particular way and come up with the same conclusions. (Collaborative narrative; March, 2017).

Feminist academics in the 1990s sought to highlight the emotional realm in research and doctoral supervision, for example, Aker and Feuerverger (1996, in Rowntree, 2015) but it has since waned. However, Rowntree (2015) sees that the practice of supervision is both embodied and situated and although structurally asymmetrical, it is a reciprocating process. Rowntree (Ibid.), drawing on the work of Ingleton (1999) argued that developing a confident scholar-self arises from a supervisory relationship that is founded on close social bonds influenced by emotional exchanges between student and supervisor.

It was the relationship with my first supervisor that has truly made a difference to my ability to be reflexive, and to remain excited about my research. I missed her when getting together became difficult. She has provided a space in which it is 'safe to feel vulnerable' (Rowntree, 2015, p. 106).

Through our conversations, in which we talked about the research, the research process and, of course, education and class, my supervisor and I entered into what later became creative spaces, which although not therapeutic, became 'interactional moments that leave marks on people's lives' (Denzin, 1989, p.15). Whilst the discussion was meant to lead me to my conclusions there was a strong sense of reciprocity and through sharing our lived experiences, there became a sense of deeper understanding of self for both of us.

Alys: You would have been thinking about things very differently back then...and that was part of the conversation I had with my parents. I would never have asked those questions if it hadn't been for the conversations that we have been having. (Collaborative narrative: February 2017).

The high degree of emotional and intellectual involvement invested in this supervisory relationship has contributed to giving me the sense of belonging and recognition (Honneth, 1995) I crave.

During the writing process there have been incredibly emotional moments suffered in isolation, and with those whom I know and trust, including my supervisors. This is how the doing of the thesis was deeply embodied - where the mind and the body worked together. Writing my auto/biography as the basis for this thesis has enabled me to bring together the impact of the past and present. As I have alluded already, and will continue to share, my doctoral study has become part of the struggle for recognition. My thesis has become a means of challenging formerly accepted notions of structural positioning. I haven't finished becoming, not even of becoming an academic; it is a continuing process. But engaging in doctoral study has prompted a set of new narratives about who I am.



Alongside the 'loving' relationship of my supervisors I have also received emotional support from my 'real' academic friends. One friend, Mary, who was experiencing the same academic struggles and conflicts herself, has proved to be a constant source of empathy, and encouragement. She has acted as a sounding board helping me through difficult times by putting things into perspective, and asking challenging questions about research drafts, theoretical frameworks and conclusions. I would have completed my dissertation even without her, but the final product wouldn't have been nearly as good without her encouragement, friendship and love.

The auto/biographical research approach has enabled me to create space in my life to reflect on who I am in relation to self and others and 're-collect' (Etherington, 2004) an aspect of myself that had not previously been known; thus acknowledging the intricacy of my identity and increasing my understanding of my 'self', and it has proved to be a vehicle for growth. It may be risky to acknowledge the emotional dimension of the doctoral education but it is emotion that has been the driving force behind the risks that I have taken; it is the vulnerability and the suffering that is felt in the scholarly pursuit of knowledge that has had the biggest impact on my cognition.

## **Writing to reclaim the self**

I would contend that the auto/biographical exploration, and the associated deconstruction of the self as a result of the research has enabled me to understand better the formation of self and identity. Writing about my life has become a healing endeavour. In the process of paying attention to my history while writing my auto/biography, I have recollected aspects of my experiences that I had known tacitly without knowing how I knew. In particular, the auto/biographical account of my childhood has allowed me to speak of events that were silenced as they were happening.

Autobiographies written by women differ greatly from autobiographies written by men (Jelinek 1980); men focus on their connectedness to society and 'tend to idealize their lives or cast them into heroic molds to project their universal import' (Jelinek, 1980, p. 14), whereas women focus on the personal and reveal 'a self-consciousness and a need to sift through their lives for explanations and understanding' (Ibid., p.15). The task of transforming my 'classed' experience into a thesis that links knowledge production with healing and reconstruction (Walsh, 1997) is an example of feminist research (Stanley and Wise, 1993).

Writing my thesis has not been a simple matter of writing words on a page; writing has lent itself to thinking and feeling which are deeply entwined with, not only becoming a scholar, but also with fighting feelings of doubt, and lack of self-worth.

*It is clear from the discussion I had with my supervisors that I am in denial about the potential of an autobiographical account of my life as an academic from working-class origins. I recognise this but it still feels uncomfortable. What if people think it is a cop out - it is easy to write auto/biography (little do they know!); or think I am being self-indulgent (my mum would say so) (RD: March 2015).*

Writing auto/biographically has made visible the processes that have made up my 'self' and identity. It has become a way of working myself out as I went along; identifying and challenging feelings of inferiority and illegitimacy, instead providing a resource of hope. In this way, writing has proved to be a dynamic, creative process; a method of discovery rather than just a means of writing up a piece of research (Richardson, 1994).

When I first started to write auto/biographically I started writing in an exploratory way. I had never written in this way before. I admit that at first I was reluctant to share my experiences on paper, worried about how I would be perceived by the reader. In the process of writing, I read and re-read my entries many times and, like an

interviewer, I asked follow up questions which enabled me to add detail and context to my account. It is rare that we enter conversations with ourselves (Diamond, 1993); as such the process of writing has encouraged me to enter a dialogue with myself and has helped me to distinguish between my different voices; my memory, my commentary and my analysis, each voice provided another way of seeing and knowing; each voice provided an 'opportunity for structuring and restructuring experience, the modes of thinking, feeling and experiencing' (Diamond, 1993, p.512).

The struggle to write whilst my thinking was still evolving, whilst at the same time struggling to think when there was so much reading and writing to do, took real effort and became an ongoing struggle. But in the main, writing has constituted a somewhat cathartic exercise bringing to the fore many thoughts and emotions that I have not expressed before. I have been forced to think about myself in ways that I am not accustomed to. In this way, narrative enquiry, via a cycle of internal dialogue and enquiry, has enabled me to interpret my own experience. This has involved questioning my assumptions about reality, critiquing relations of power, and reflecting on the complexities of multiple identities. As I wrote and re-wrote I began to recognise and understand myself in a different light; I saw a human experience – a woman struggling with notions of self.

The recall and historical analysis of incidents have constituted important departure points for reflection and understanding of the self and of the professional (Tripp, 2012). As in all biographical writing, some narrative threads were initiated and then left again without conclusion, but some of the associations led to different paths and deeper emotional understanding. As I saw the auto/biography taking shape I allowed more and more of myself to be revealed. In so doing, I have created the conditions for rediscovering the meanings of the past.

Through writing, I have been able to think about the self, teaching and research and how they are constructed by each of us in community. This thesis shows that, even when thoughts about the self becomes our central text, the self who later reads the writing is different from the author self who originally wrote it (Richardson, 1997). In this way the dynamic process of writing has provided a 'site of exploration and

struggle' (Ibid., p. 87) which I found to be both troubling yet therapeutic. In particular, my account of becoming a teacher educator, and researcher has provided an opportunity for me to access a thoughtful process within which I can explore the private and public self.

Writing my thesis has been an ethical practice that has gone beyond the pure mechanics of the process; it has strengthened my connections between body, mind and spirit. The actual process of writing has enabled me to recover fragments of my life, to re-educate myself, and to create a new story; it has become a way of working myself out.

Whilst not being brave enough to adopt one of the evocative writing styles that Richardson (1994) suggested, I have found that writing has driven me out of my intellectual and professional crisis. It has enabled me to reconsider concerns about what I do and how I do it. The narrative approach has provided a conduit between my private and public self and has enabled me to explore my own construction of self and identity. My emerging sense of identity as an academic has become part of my new story.

However, writing from a position as knower and teller has not been without its problems; subjectivity/authority, and authorship/reflexivity have unmasked a complicated political, personal and ideological story. One part of writing this thesis that has been particularly emotionally challenging, has been writing about and acknowledging for the first time just how flawed and damaging the relationship with my mum has been and indeed still is, and the impact that this has had on both of us. But at least now I can understand it better; I have not been able to confront some of the pain in my life until now.

Importantly the act of writing autobiographically has propelled me out of my ontological and epistemological inertia; it has provided me with a resource of hope. It has solidified my concerns about politics in education and has introduced me to an intellectual community of like-minded scholars. Thankfully I have learned that there are teacher educators everywhere questioning their practice, and academics pushing

the boundaries of our discipline. I am proud that from an epistemological perspective, my research is also the embodiment of what I am trying to demonstrate, i.e. that engagement with the intellectual discipline of teacher education has made me a better teacher educator, insofar as I am making the transition from second order practitioner to researcher/scholar.

But it has been writing about how my personal history is connected to who I am, as a middle-class, middle-aged academic, that has been the most enlightening experience. It corresponds to the idea that understanding oneself requires looking at the ground out of which it grew (Mills, 1959/2000). As such this thesis has become both a piece of academic work and most importantly a piece of my life, as well as a piece of my struggle for recognition (Honneth, 1995). The award of PhD will mean that I have been recognised as having a legitimate place in academia, and in society as a whole.

## **The beautiful risk of education<sup>10</sup>**

Government rhetoric suggests that educational participation is desirable and valuable, and can bring about positive changes for disadvantaged social groups; but for me and many of my academic friends, there is recognition of the inescapable desires and fears that accompany becoming educated.

Fear of failure is omnipresent; in particular, my professional identity is now bound up with my doctorate and becoming an academic. The fear of failure is palpable; not achieving the doctorate will serve only to show that as a working-class woman I am not 'fit' for the academic award before a real, or imagined audience. I have internalised an understanding of failure that is almost pathological. Like the working-class girls in

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<sup>10</sup> The title of Gert Biesta's (2014) book that epitomises what education could and should be, and indeed for me has been.

Reay's (2005) study, I still 'inhabit a psychic economy of class defined by fear, anxiety and unease, where failure looms large' (2005, p.917). The anticipated shame of being seen as over-reaching and failing will serve to show that I am still not good enough; there is still a sense of class inferiority in my relations with middle-class friends and colleagues, which serves to highlight the fragility of my new identity.

## Chapter 10: I have not always been who I am now

According to the book of success, a working-class identity is intended for disposal. In order to 'make it' into the dominant society, one overcomes the class circumstances of birth and moves into the middle and upper class (Zandy, 1994, p.15).



ESREA Conference (Copenhagen, 2017)

### Introduction

Well there it is.... I am now an academic; a 'supreme classifier amongst classifiers' (Bourdieu, 1988, p. xi). I emerge from this study as a subject of the nexus of structures that establish what it is to be an educated working-class woman. I have travelled far, in subjective terms, from the life in which my habitus was formed; so far it could even 'be described as miraculous' (Bourdieu, in Bourdieu and Eagleton, 1992, p.117).

As noted in my introduction in chapter 1, I came to the topic of my research through the circumstances of my own life. The research was founded on feelings of illegitimacy; not only my status as a child born out of wedlock, but also how I feel now, as a senior lecturer, working within higher education. My original project outgrew its

conception. I set out to write a thesis about education and found myself writing a thesis about myself instead. It has gone beyond an academic exercise and has instead turned into a political act in a bid to uncover the hidden injuries of class (Sennett and Cobb, 1977).

My early explorations into my auto/biography, as I chronicled my life and theorised my assumptions, started to reveal unexplored aspects of my life, and of my 'self' that I had never dared to consider before. So in the spirit of feminist epistemology I embarked on a journey into myself to tell the story of 'who I was to who I am now', during which, I shared not only the facts about the past and the present, but also my feelings as I struggled with my sense of self as a middle-aged, middle-class woman from working-class origins.

The examination of my childhood enabled me to look beyond my own experience to understand that my own needs for recognition were founded on my mum's need for recognition. I am certain that my mum, a single mother, like anyone else, longed to have value and to be seen to be of value in society; her children's academic success was integral to her own sense of recognition (Steedman, 1986; West, 1996). For her, her illegitimate children becoming educated was a means of showing that she was making a valid contribution to society (Honneth, 1995); a means of denying the slights and humiliations heaped on the working-class people 'just like us' (Skeggs, 1997). Therefore, my early educational success was driven by a desire to help my mum prove that she was a 'good-enough' mother (Lawler, 2000). Gaining my mum's love depended on me being clever. Success at school mattered. 'I had a moral obligation to be intelligent' (Trilling, in Hoggart 2009, p. xvii).

And while I started tentatively, the relationship between the research process, the writing process, and the 'self' became stronger, particularly as I found my voice and gained the courage to write about the emotional and personal dimension of my life, and how this was intrinsically connected to the research process. And whilst undertaking this research has been a long and painful process, the act of researching has propelled me out of my ontological and epistemological inertia. It has given me a sense of purpose. Studying for a PhD has provided a way of reconstructing the self,



enabling me to acquire legitimate knowledge 'the very stuff of middle-class cultural capital' (Lawler, 2000, p.10).

Using Bourdieu and Honneth as sensitising frameworks and encompassing concepts of habitus and mis/recognition through a psycho-social multidisciplinary lens, I have confronted the lived experience of class relations through the auto/biography of someone who has made class transition - 'une miraculée'. This, the final chapter, connects the present with the past.

It is important to re-assert that I was not driven to auto/biographical enquiry from the outset: it was the field of teacher education that provided the catalyst for my initial enquiry. Entry into the research field coincided with a raft of neoliberal policy initiatives that made me challenge my own assumptions about the purpose of education. Thus, the central assertion of this thesis became an exploration of the inter-relationship between class transition and education in a bid to understand the impact of both in the formation of the self and identity. As such, the thesis presents a psycho-social critical analysis of the lived experiences of class from the perspective of an educated working-class woman.

In entering the academy, not for the first time in my life, I entered a third space in which past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion' intermingle (Bhabha 1994, p.1) to challenge my assumptions to create something new (Bhabha,1990). The academy, and in particular my auto/biographical exploration for the PhD, has provided a 'terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular and communal – that initiate new signs of identity' (Bhabha, 1994, p.1). In the writing of this thesis I have recognised that I have created a very successful false self (Winnicott, 1965) in which I experience the pain, as well as pleasure, in the borderlands of working and middle-class and acknowledge that I have yet to find a sense of self that feels authentic and true. For this reason, I would like to suggest a 'third space' in Ingram and Abrahams conjunctive habits; one that acknowledges successful renegotiation of the secondary field but as a false self, in which some of the practices in the secondary field are consciously rejected because of a strong affinity to the originary field. This 'uneasy' habitus recognises that I have (almost) achieved

successful assimilation to the new field, but feel unable to relinquish a strong sense of responsibility making me critical of my secondary field.

## **Who I am now: Class, education, identity and epistemology**

Like the tree that puts roots deep into the clay, each of us needs the anchor of belonging in order to bend with the storms and continue towards the light (O'Donohue, 2000, p. xvi)

Filling in the 'Great British Class Survey' (BBC, 2013), I had to acknowledge that I was now part of 'technical middle-class'. I have **become** middle-class. As I have made the transition from one social class to another I seem to have successfully internalised many, or even most, of the 'required' middle-class practices as elaborations to my primary or originary habitus (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016, p. 160). However, I seem to have defied the temptation abandon my originary habitus (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). It was this that has guided me towards acknowledging a substantial change in my 'self'. As a consequence of writing this thesis, I am no longer defining myself as a 'working-class academic', instead preferring the term 'academic from the working-class' which acknowledges both my primary habitus and class transition (of which I both proud and ashamed). This has provided me with a marginal vantage point from which I have been able to rearticulate the habitus (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016) and to think about what it is to feel both, or indeed neither, working-class and middle-class.

The notion of 'becoming' suggests a change over time where the latter position is normally considered better than the former (Barnacle, 2005). I cannot deny that my lifestyle is better than if I had remained working-class, but like those before, and indeed those who will follow, I have undertaken a journey from one class to another that has been perilous. I have assimilated into middle-class life even if my feel for the game (Bourdieu, 1990) is relatively weak; there 'remains within the self a continual reminder that the habitus is not one that can be fully inhabited; that the dispositions

implied (by the habitus) are not fully possessed' (Lawler, 2000, p.114). I have suffered both the hidden injuries, but also the hidden rewards of class. Class transition has challenged deeply-rooted, self-defining attitudes, and values and beliefs: the personal re-definition of the 'substantial self' has been slow, stressful and sometimes traumatic (Nias, 1989), but I have changed.

I do not assume a monolithic experience; indeed, the contributors to the edited texts referred to throughout this thesis, offer similar narratives which depict the difficulties of working in the academy from an educated working-class lecturer's perspective. In these collections, as in my own story, there is a recognition that if one is born into the working-class, there is both a personal and structural element intrinsic to the success and struggle in the academy. However, this is my story, and it is unique to me; it has told a story of how 'I have been at once freed and cut adrift by education' (Hoggart, 2009, p.xiii) and why.

Educational attainment has brought with it self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem, (Honneth, 1995) but it is fragile. Mezirow (in Dirkx, Mezirow and Cranton, 2006) would argue that I have undergone a 'transformative learning experience' But, throughout this thesis I have been extremely reluctant to use the terms transformed and transformative as I consider that they are over used in contemporary discourses of learning, often mistakenly referring to an acquisition of knowledge and skills. This is something also levelled at Mezirow's definition (Illeris, 2014). Yet as Mezirow has argued undertaking the PhD has involved a rational process of critically assessing my epistemic and ontological assumptions and has brought about a fundamental change in my frames of reference (Mezirow, Ibid.). There is no denying that undertaking the doctorate has added meaning to my life. It has, in Mezirow's (Ibid.) definition, enabled me to understand myself and consequently make changes to the way I think about myself, even if not challenging my assumptions about society. I no longer see myself as working-class, or a teacher of teachers; I now recognise that I am equal, at least educationally, to a small group of academic elite that mostly originate from the middle-class. However, in response to the structuring forces in the middle-class field (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016), I am still unable to renegotiate my habitus and my assumptions completely.

Today, my ways of knowing and acting have been influenced by my earlier experiences, and from ongoing negotiations with the contemporary social world. My auto/biography has revealed how my experiences as a learner in childhood, adolescence, and my career path have all framed the epistemological values which inform my approaches to teaching in higher education. My psychocultural background has meant that I seek to question the dominant ideology which in turn has shaped my pedagogical approaches as a teacher educator. In particular, being raised in poverty means that I place great value on education, valuing not only the importance of educational outcomes, but also the power of education to contribute to the formation of certain 'qualities' of the person that are not about socialisation, but about the person as individual (Biesta, 2010). This has resulted in developing certain habits of mind about teaching and learning in initial teacher education that raise tensions and dilemmas for me as a person and as a professional. It is important to acknowledge that since joining the university in 2007, the socio-political ideology of society has changed, and so have the discourses about what is important in education and teacher education. We have seen a surge of neoliberalism and the dominance of New Right views on education (Ball, 2013) that have contrasted significantly with my perspective. Ideology critique and critical self-reflection on my assumptions, through the chronicling of the lived experience of class relations (Brookfield, 1995), has and still is helping me to reconcile my epistemological beliefs, and subsequently how I position myself in the institution.

I think that teaching and learning should encourage students to dissect and analyse the assumptions and practices that form the education discipline's approach to the construction and use of knowledge. Therefore, I consistently, and persistently, argue that it is imperative for teacher education to have teacher educators who can intellectualise teaching and learning, and can prepare the teachers of the future as intellectuals. The constant struggle to hold on to critical pedagogy in the face of hegemonic ideology is challenging for me, but I am beginning to realise that this not a result of subjective failure, but rather the problem rests in the power structure of the institution. However, it means that my moral expectations of what a university should be doing to educate young teachers is being denied. And this brings with it feelings of frustration and disillusionment.

However, it is also important to acknowledge that my role as a teacher educator affords me some feelings of self-worth (Honneth, 1995). The 'loving' (Ibid.) relationships I have with my students are very important to me. I model this in my own practice: I show my students that I have respect for them and I recognise and value their own autonomy and agency (Honneth, 1995) and encourage them to have a strong sense of the ethical and moral responsibility to their own students when they are teaching. In this context I am able to achieve self-esteem (Honneth, 1995). My work holds meaning for me because I feel like I am making a worthwhile contribution to the teaching community, and society as a whole (Honneth, 1995). It is this personal reward of enabling others to fulfil their potential for educational experiences, as indeed I have, that engenders an improved sense of self-worth.

Now as I reach the final stages of my PhD, I can deferentially acknowledge that completion of my PhD represents part of my struggle for recognition. Through engagement with the PhD, and particularly by incorporating 'writing as enquiry' as a research approach, I have been able to identify my own uniqueness and special characteristics (Honneth, 1995). My PhD has provided a transitional space and writing down my story has enabled a renegotiation of the 'self' (West, 2014) where I have been able to recognise that throughout my life there have been people who have shown love, who have helped ease the feelings of inferiority that accompany a history of poverty and disadvantage, and help me develop a positive relationship to the self, and to grow and to flourish. Moreover, writing auto/biographically has also enabled me to reconcile letting go of past relationships. In particular, Honneth's (1995, 2007) theory of recognition has enabled me to re-orientate my thinking about how justice, through recognition or disrespect, has had an impact on my personal and professional identities. I have realised that my quest for academic attainment is not based merely on becoming respectable; it has been a quest for recognition and understanding in the form of love, rights and solidarity (Honneth, 1995).

Entering and achieving in higher education is commonly perceived as gaining moral worth and honour, and this is particularly so for women and the working-class (Reay, 2010). For my own part, although I did not appreciate it at the time, I had always thought that my yearning for educational achievement was to demonstrate that I was

respectable (Skeggs 1997) which Skeggs argued is ‘a burden of class, a standard to which to aspire’ (1997, p.3), but what I have realised, through chronicling and theorising the embodied experiences of being an educated working-class woman in a neoliberal, middle-class field is that the desire to belong, through recognition is at the heart of human nature; a sense of belonging is liberating – in this way belonging could be considered a necessity (O’Donohue, 2000).

Using Bourdieu and Honneth as sensitising frameworks, I have now realised that my drive for educational qualifications is not only about gaining respectability (Skeggs, 1997), it is also about gaining recognition. This encompasses gaining acceptance for who I am, and the contribution I make to society (Honneth, 1995; 2007). Belonging and recognition, I have realised, is exceptionally important to the working-class. So in order to succeed in the world, I have become someone different. It was not intentional and it has happened gradually, and not without injury and loss.

## **Main Findings**

### **Education, a habitus clivé and misrecognition**

Far too often, academic work ‘overlooks the psychic experience of living class in contemporary society’ (Reay, 2015, p.21). So, the aim of this study was to use auto/biographical methods, using psychosocial frameworks as interpretive devices, to present the story of ‘une miraculée’, in an attempt to identify the relationship between class transition and education, and to understand the impact of both in the formation of the self and identity. Through confronting my own history and experiences, using Bourdieu and Honneth as sensitising frameworks, I have been able to

- establish my motivation for continuous academic development;
- illustrate how ‘formal’ education has enabled me to cross class boundaries;

- share the embodied experiences of being an educated working-class woman in a middle-class field;
- illustrate how my class origins have had an enduring impact on my epistemological beliefs;
- show how the PhD has had an impact on me personally and professionally.

The first finding that quickly became apparent from my data, was that early psycho-social experiences, that form the habitus, are enduring. Being born a bastard meant that my primary habitus was shaped by my position as an illegitimate daughter of an unmarried mother in the 1960s. As a young child I would have internalised my mum's feelings of shame and stigma. This social positioning could have circumscribed my position in society, but it did not. The data, particularly in chapter six and seven is illustrative of how the complex issues of legitimacy and agency continued to impact the formation of self and identity throughout my life from infancy to adulthood. As the findings show the lived experience of being a working-class academic is filled with fear, anxiety, and huge ambivalences.

The second outcome to emerge, which is consistent with many of my theoretical friends, is that education, in the form of qualification and socialisation (Biesta, 2010), has been fundamental to the crossing of class boundaries. It could be argued that it has been transformational (Mezirow, in Dirkx, Mezirow and Cranton, 2006). Analysis of the data exposed that it was my mum's interest in my early education, driven by her desire for respectability (Skeggs, 1997), that meant I entered school with a positive attitude to learning; with educational capital. I could read and write my name, and even at the tender age of four I accepted and celebrated the significance of learning – it was a way of gaining recognition. Passing the 11+, allowed me access to the middle-class educational field. Indeed, it was the experience of going to grammar school that played a decisive part in my social mobility. Achieving academic success at grammar school led to the accrual of additional 'middle-class' educational capital. Going to work at the age of 17 years brought social and cultural capital, but not the recognition and belonging that I craved. A return to education. at the age of 25 years to gain an A level enabled me to access a Post Graduate Diploma that subsequently gave me access to a degree in Psychology, a PGCE and a Masters. There is no denying

that education has become a means of 'getting out and getting away' (Lawler, 1999, p. 12) from the working-class. I have accrued economic security and the type of social and cultural capital which is highly valued by the middle-class. Yet, as my story has exposed, being an educated working-class academic woman is not without its own issues and tensions.

Thus, the third result to be revealed was that class transition is problematic. People, like me, who have crossed the borders from poverty into middle-class are supposed to be grateful that we have 'beaten the odds', 'done good' and 'escaped' our origins (McKenzie, 2015). But it is important to acknowledge that moving from one class to another is not as simple as improving one's lot. It also involves moving from one set of cultural values to another, and these are often antagonistic and contradictory.

After many years in the 'new' cultural milieu, as a teacher and teacher educator, there is no denying, my habitus has changed. As I have encountered new situations, although they may be incongruent with my primary or originary habitus, I have been able to successfully operate within both fields (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). However, a conjunctive habitus (Ibid.) has not been a straightforward reconciliation of both habitus. There are many times when I still feel outraged by the values and beliefs of my middle-class peers. Their sense of entitlement and lack of regard for the 'other' brings forth a strong sense of social justice that I find hard to contain. It is evident that my class origins have had an enduring impact on my ontological and epistemological beliefs.

Furthermore, becoming educated has meant that I lack a sense of belonging and a lack of authentic self. As Lawler (1999) observed 'one of the ways in which social class is made 'real' is through cultural mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, of normalization and pathologisation' (Lawler, 1999, p.4-5) and this has been evident in my history. In the process of writing and analysing my auto/biography I have been able to recognise that while the intersubjective experiences of others can make me feel different and devalued by others, it is the internalised feelings of stigma (Goffman, 1963), attached to being working-class and illegitimate, that have endured.



This brings me to the fourth revelation from the data which is probably the most significant and makes the biggest contribution to the academic field. Both Bourdieu (1984) and Honneth (1995) have helped me recognise that misrecognition or disrespect at macro, meso and micro levels, and the associated feelings of insecurity and inferiority, are not merely idiosyncratic; as a result of a divided habitus, but are also founded on experiences of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1984) and intersubjective misrecognition (Honneth, 1995) enacted through a legitimised institutional habitus. As Bourdieu (1986) argued the intellectual field generates its own type of legitimacy with its own particular 'logic of practice' or 'game' and entry into that field is dependent upon at least an implicit acceptance of the 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu, 1986). It is only through writing auto/biographically in chapter seven that I have realised that I do not yet understand the rules of the game (Bourdieu, 1986). Within the academy small but significant acts of symbolic violence, in the form of a lack of recognition or disrespect, even within the most intimate of intellectual spaces, are enacted regularly. There are episodes in my auto/biography that highlight experiences where others or indeed the 'other' fail to recognise my contribution to the academy so that I have been structurally excluded from the possession of certain rights (Honneth, 1995) which has led to 'the feeling of not enjoying the status of a full-fledged partner to interaction equally endowed with moral rights' (Honneth, 1995, p.133).

And finally, undertaking the PhD has had a huge impact on my andragogy. I have become more knowledgeable with research methods and much more confident in my academic identity. Furthermore, whilst it is important to acknowledge my own contribution to auto/biography as a research approach, this has been multiplied many times over as I encourage my students to use it to understand themselves as teachers as a way of challenging their own and others' assumptions.

### **The good-enough daughter - revisited**

Whilst misrecognition and disrespect in the workplace is hard enough to bear, being expelled from my originary field has been a particularly emotional and damaging

experience. Whilst initially my mum's longing propelled my class transition, as I made the most of opportunities for further educational development and started to gain legitimate middle-class specific capital, my mum felt more and more excluded (Lawler, 2000). Paradoxically, with every new achievement in my professional career, I was travelling further away from my family, culturally and symbolically. So what started out in childhood as a means to make my mum love me more, resulted in alienating her and creating greater distance between us in adulthood. My mum thinks I am a disappointment - my crime is that I don't know my place. Growing up, the mismatch between my familial habitus and my current field caused a profound and conflicted sense of self, in which I oscillated between the loyalties of being working-class and the opportunities of mobility (Ingram and Abrahams, 2016). I have carried the burden of being expensive, ungrateful and not good enough throughout my life which has further contributed to the hidden injuries of class (Sennett and Cobb, 1977). It is a cruel irony that the very person who gave me the ambition to become educated has since turned her back on me *because* I am educated. The significant impact of this unwelcome social and psychological distance is rarely acknowledged in research about social mobility.

However, my auto/biography has enabled me to appreciate, through the immersion in the personal aspects of the relationship with my mum, that feelings of illegitimacy cannot simply be explained away within the broad context of class. It is much closer to home. Even though we are estranged, or perhaps because we remain so, my mum's absence still assumes significance. Not only do I retain a powerful sense of loss, I am also experiencing what Walkerdine, Lucey and Melody (2001, p 161) term 'survival guilt': a strong sense of indebtedness to all the sacrifices my mum made on my/our behalf. While I have touched on this aspect throughout this thesis (I have been told that my mum haunts the work), I am not brave enough to venture any further than I have done.

To conclude, through education, I have successfully disrupted the discourse of middle-class expectations of the working-class. As my story has revealed, this transition has not been simple or without significant loss, but this has not prevented me from gaining knowledge and academic qualifications, enjoying many aspects of

working in higher education. I now recognise that throughout my life I have been caught between tension of a desire for respectability (Skeggs, 1997) and recognition (Honneth, 1995) which has led to a continuing need to keep asserting my working-class habitus. As such, a significant aspiration of this thesis was to 'come out' – to acknowledge that I am proud of my working-class origins and to encourage more academics from the working-class 'to internalise a positive sense of their working-classness, one secured through pride, dignity and a strong sense of personal worth' (Reay, 2013, p. 674).

It is anticipated that these findings will contribute further to the current and on-going dialogue about class and education, already well documented by my theoretical friends in chapter four, in a bid to disrupt the dominant discourses that class transition is desirable and positive.

## **The contribution of the work**

This thesis offers four contributions to the field of psycho-social academia. I have decided to write them in order of significance in the last section of this thesis.

### **Challenging the invisibility of class inequality in the academy**

I stated in my introduction that I was motivated to undertake this research through a desire to improve the understanding of working-class experiences in education, and the impact that this has on the formation of self and identity. Whilst I did not set out to do this from my own perspective, I would like to suggest that the thesis reaches more widely than my own experience to be representative of a collective story (Richardson, 1997) of academics from the working-class.

Thus, my original contribution to the academic field is to challenge the invisibility of class inequality in higher education for both working-class students, and academics. As, my data has revealed that there is still misrecognition of working-class habitus in the archetypal white, middle-class male academy.

I would like to address this from two perspectives; the working-class student in academia, and from the perspective of an academic from the working-class.

My own story of entering higher education as a non-traditional student (Chapter 6) is a familiar story well documented by many others (West, 1996; Reay, David and Ball, 2005; Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2009; Finnegan, Merrill and Thunborg, 2014; Reay, 2017). Realising that I had so little social, educational and cultural capital as a mature student, even at this post-1992 university, served only to contribute to pre-existing feelings of inferiority and isolation. This has had a profound and direct impact on the way I work with student teachers who come from working-class origins, in my own teaching. As I have already described in chapter seven, I am more able than some of my colleagues to recognise and empathise with students who are first generation university students, in particular defending their values, beliefs and behaviours so that they are not misrecognised as laziness, inability or poor attitude, but are often genuinely due to a lack of capital – social and cultural. This is not a criticism of any one set of individuals, for it is important to remember academics, like most people, can and will make stereotypical judgments or decisions on the basis of their prior experience, their own personal deep-seated thought patterns, assumptions or interpretations, or as Bourdieu (1990b) would argue their habitus.

My findings will present a challenge to universities, like mine, who serve communities of students who may lack the middle-class social and cultural capital. It is important that institutions recognise that there still exists a culture of misrecognition for those values, beliefs and behaviours that are not founded on middle-class assumptions. If we, in higher education, really want to widen participation to enable and empower working-class students, we need acknowledge that their experience of higher education will be different from their middle-class peers, and indeed, for many, very challenging on social and economic levels. This means acknowledging that socio-economic disadvantage can have a negative impact on a student's ability to learn, and succeed at both a cognitive and emotional level. Academics, particularly those middle-class academics with inherited social and cultural capital, need to acknowledge their class prejudice, either, explicit or implicit.

It is important to acknowledge that other minority groups have, over the past fifty years, developed strategies to address (or at least try to) oppressive practices in institutions, both in the private and public sector, whereas socio-economic disadvantage is still not sufficiently recognised. I would like to suggest that socio-economic disadvantage should also be written in to universities' inclusion statements along with the other nine 'protected characteristics' of the Equality Act (2010) to ensure that there is better provision to support this group of vulnerable students.

I also set out, like Bourdieu, to find what it means to be an academic from the working-class. As I have illustrated, my story includes episodes of resilience and courage as well as defeat and despair. But it is the 'policy micro politics' (Hoyle, 1982) still enacted within the institution that means the culturally marginal (like me) are identified as the 'other', and are sometimes treated as irrelevant and/or inferior as a status group. We are subjected to a kind of cultural domination that renders us either invisible or, if visible, subjects of misrecognition and disrespect (Honneth, 2007). I think that it is now time to challenge the academy's complacency about the moral significance of class (Sayer, 2005) for both students and staff, and show understanding and compassion. This thesis aims to shine a light on the pretence that class inequality does not exist in higher education.

To this end, I have used my auto/biography to 'resist class amnesia' (Zandy 1995, p.1) and use my working-class as heritage as a tool to influence institutional change. As Zandy points out '[t]he lived experience of working-class people encodes a kind of knowledge – especially of the body- that is absent in bourgeois academic institutions (1995, p2). Thus, my first contribution to the academic field is to challenge the middle-class myopia in the academy, and to invite colleagues in the academy to confront their unconscious prejudices towards those of us from a different class, not just from the students' perspective, but also for staff. Because if the working-class amongst us do not speak out, we can claim no right to our legitimate knowledge.

## **Contribution to auto/biographical research - writing as enquiry**

Traditional research methods, in which narrative data has been used as a 'human filler to statistical findings' (Richardson, 1997, p.27) easily neglects the moral character of life and experience. But for me writing my narrative has proved to be much more powerful than this; it has provided 'both a mode of representation and a mode of reasoning' (Richardson, 1997, p.28). Writing my auto/biography has enabled me to reconstruct how my identity has changed with time and space as I have moved across class boundaries. Thus, it is my intention that this research will make an important contribution to the existing research paradigm that uses auto/biographical approaches to examine the lived experiences of people's lives; but most notably, that researchers can conduct auto/biographical research on their own lives, and for it to still to be valid and credible.

While there are lots of interesting examples of autobiographical research in which researchers have collated autobiographical stories, for example Zandy (1994). I consider that I have pushed the boundaries of the auto/biographical paradigm by offering truly 'auto/ biographical' research in which I am the author, the object and beneficiary of the research. Examples of this type are much less common, with Carolyn Steedman's (1986) text providing (in my opinion) the finest specimen. Being both the researcher and the researched; the subject and the object; the narrator and the protagonist has afforded me a double consciousness; a unique 'mode of seeing' (Brooks, 2007) which has served as a powerful 'space of resistance' and a 'site of radical possibility' (hooks, 2004, p.156).

However, to know and to reveal what the person is like, to seek an understanding of who I am has brought my life from the private into the public, and I am sure that this will expose me to criticism of solipsism. I continue to argue that this form of auto/biography provides a legitimate means of illuminating the minutia of self/other encounters which are important for examining society at a meso, micro and macro level. From my own perspective, grounding my thinking and feelings within the context of theoretical others, who had had similar experiences, I was able to explore my own construction of identity. As such, my research has enabled me to explore how

education in general, and in particular the PhD process, has brought with it dichotomous feelings of empowerment and exclusion.

Auto/biography has offered a distinct approach to study human experience and offered important insights in to the complexities of people's lives that would otherwise be missed or neglected in larger quantitative studies (Merrill and West, 2009). Using auto/biography I have been able to closely examine my own experiences from a critical perspective. This reflexive, auto/biographical research process has enabled a deep and personal understanding of the self and has given me a sense of agency. As Carl Rogers (1967) taught, growth and change can only happen when we experience empathetic understanding of our frame of reference and this is what I have done. It is only through the process of writing that I have begun to understand how I can emancipate myself from those early experiences and will become part of a valued community of scholars and this will bring with it love, rights and solidarity (Honneth, 1999). I know that I have created new meanings for myself through documenting my life story, and my hope is that I have done the same for anyone who reads this thesis. Through engaging in a meta-dialogue with myself, I have begun to redefine my professional identity from one of practitioner, to one of academic, in which the research is as much about my identity, as it is about the role of teacher educator. As a consequence, not only do I feel more like an academic, I also feel much better equipped to support my students in all aspects of their learning to be a teacher. I have become more confident in my ability to articulate my philosophy for teaching and learning, and now have the language to be able to communicate this.

The addition of the collaborative narrative approach (Arvay, 1998; 2003) added another dimension to the auto/biographical approach, dispelling the 'myth of silent authorship' (Charmaz and Mitchell, 1996, p. 193) and therefore makes an original contribution to field. Sharing my research data with my supervisor, using this approach, challenged conventional roles and boundaries in autobiographical texts (and probably supervisory relationships). By using collaborative narrative my supervisor was able to foster a deeper level of reflexivity which has led me to some fascinating insights.

Furthermore, undertaking this research has enabled me to recognise the importance both of narrative, and of the power of conversation, as valid research approaches. As part of my day-to-day work, I engage in many conversations with students and colleagues that inspire me and fill me with a sense of awe. As a result of undertaking this research I realise we all have important stories to tell about who we are and how we came to be. I have therefore initiated two research projects that draw on some of the themes identified in this research. For the first project I intend to collect stories from student teachers. I am often intrigued about why people want to become teachers, and while I have had many conversations exploring this topic, I consider there is value in ensuring they are recorded and shared. Similarly, towards the end of my research I became increasingly aware of the personal impact of the affective dimension of undertaking my research: I would like to find out if this is an experience unique to me or something that is much more common but is rarely shared. And secondly, I have discovered the importance of the dynamics of researcher relationships and my supervisor and I intend to research and write about our experiences. So, like any good piece of research, it does not end here: for me this is just the beginning of my academic identity.

### **Critiquing initial teacher education**

The third is a much needed contribution to the critique of what is happening in Higher Education, and in particular Initial Teacher Education. Joining the voices of other teacher educators, for example, Ellis, McNicholl and Pendry (2012), Orchard and Winch (2015) who are worried about the demise of the academic in teacher training. I have discussed from my own perspective, based on my own ontological and epistemological beliefs, what the moral imperative of higher education should be, challenging neo-liberal discourses.

### **Theoretical friends – Bourdieu and Honneth**

The final contribution is theoretical; the combined use of Bourdieu and Honneth as theoretical conceptual frameworks in the examination of classed experiences has



proved to be a truly intense and rewarding experience. While Honneth had drawn critically on Bourdieu's work, there are very few examples, with the exception of West, Fleming, and Finnegan (2013) and Fleming and Gonzalez-Monteagudo (2014), of the theoretical frameworks being used in a complementary way to understand the experience of structural inequality and the exercise of personal agency. I would like to argue that these combined theories form a bridge between the psycho and the social, and structure and agency this was relatively unexplored until this point.

## **Some final thoughts**

Often the working-class are studied by the middle-class, in which we as the 'they' are treated as a separate species to be observed and studied. This is a thesis, presented as an empirical narrative, that represents the story of a working-class woman from the position of an educated woman from the working-class. This is not a story of 'bildungsroman' – it is a story of agency. It is a narrative which recognises the heterogeneous nature of people who work in higher education and the heterogeneous nature of the working-class. Rarely are the people from the working-class allowed to speak for ourselves. Becoming an academic has provided this platform.

Our theories of life are grounded in our life experiences; through exploring my own position I have been able to make my unspoken values and cultural knowledge explicit. It has helped me locate my position within society and indeed the academy. I have used my auto/biography as a disruptive strategy that has enabled me to think deeply about teacher education and academia as a whole. The research has been 'uniquely created in the presence and service of quite particular contexts or moral and political need' (Clough, 2002, p. 5.). And now as my story is told 'it ceases to be a story; it becomes a piece of history' (Steedman, 1986, p.143). However, it would be disingenuous of readers to think that this has been a straightforward endeavour – it has been the work of years of careful study and self-analysis.

At times this thesis has been painful to write – it goes against the grain of someone who has no confidence to see myself in print in this way. But like Oakley (1984) I have claimed the right to share my pain and passion. I suspect that writing this thesis will be considered brave by some people and by others foolhardy, but if my thesis has helped a few people with their own struggles with class then it was worth the effort. I can now understand that it is the struggle that counts.

As Shaull (1996, in Freire) suggested, ‘There is no such thing as neutral educational process’ (1996, p.16). For me education has proved to be beyond an instrument of social and cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1984) and has become instead ‘the practice of freedom’ (Freire, 1996). I have used education to free myself from socio-economic disadvantage, although structural forces have meant that, as an educated woman from the working-class, I still know my place.

Now I find myself in the final stage of my doctoral thesis – something that I could never have imagined. It has taken a long time but a successful outcome will bring with it a rare opportunity to feel a sense of pride, pleasure and privilege. For me, the doctorate has always been a search for wisdom for its own sake; it has offered the means for recognition and belonging, rather than attainment for instrumental reasons. It has been ‘about desire, made manifest in feelings of self-worth, shame, pride, anger, joy, and the need to belong against the odds’ (Bryant and Jaworski 2015, p.133). I have constructed the PhD as the pinnacle of my academic career – I will be recognised as making a valid contribution to the academic field; for me this is the highest accolade.

Every story told is charged with a special emotional resonance that leaves both the author and the reader enriched. Writing auto/biographically has proven to be therapeutic, educational and reflexive, as well as agentic. In the act of writing this thesis I hope I have demonstrated intellectual humility over intellectual arrogance; intellectual courage over intellectual cowardice; intellectual autonomy over intellectual conformity; intellectual integrity over intellectual hypocrisy; and intellectual perseverance over intellectual laziness. I am immensely proud of this thesis: as a person who did not have the best start in life I have exceeded my own

expectations. In this way this doctoral thesis has served two functions, it has become both a piece of academic work, and a means of gaining recognition and respectability.

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# Appendix 1

## Initial Ethics Review Checklist (2012)

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institution

For Research Office Use

Checklist No:

Date Received:

### ETHICS REVIEW CHECKLIST

Sections A and B of this checklist must be completed for every research or knowledge transfer project that involves human or animal<sup>1</sup> participants. These sections serve as a toolkit that will identify whether a full application for ethics approval needs to be submitted.

If the toolkit shows that there is **no need for a full ethical review**, Sections D, E and F should be completed and the checklist forwarded to the Research Governance Manager as described in Section C.

If the toolkit shows that **a full application is required**, this checklist should be set aside and an *Application for Faculty Research Ethics Committee Approval Form* - or an appropriate external application form - should be completed and submitted. **There is no need to complete both documents.**

**Before completing this checklist, please refer to Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants in the University Research Governance Handbook.**

The principal researcher/project leader (or, where the principal researcher/project leader is a student, their supervisor) is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgement in this review.

**N.B. This checklist must be completed – and any resulting follow-up action taken - before potential participants are approached to take part in any study.**

Type of Project - please mark (x) as appropriate

Research

x

Knowledge Exchange



## Section A: Applicant Details

A1. Name of applicant:	Paula Stone
A2. Status (please underline):	Postgraduate Student / Staff Member
A3. Email address:	Paula .stone@canterbury.ac.uk
A4. Contact address:	<p>CCCU</p> <p>North Holmes Road</p> <p>Wisher Tower 4.12</p> <p>CT1 1QJ</p>
A5. Telephone number	01227 767700 x3840

## Section B: Ethics Checklist

Please answer each question by marking (X) in the appropriate box:

		Yes	No
1.	Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children, people with learning disabilities), or in unequal relationships (e.g. people in prison, your own staff or students)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the vulnerable groups or individuals to be recruited (e.g. students at school, members of self-help groups, residents of nursing home)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.	Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without usual informed consent procedures having been implemented in advance (e.g. covert observation, certain ethnographic studies)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.	Will the study use deliberate deception (this does <b><i>not</i></b> include randomly assigning participants to groups in an experimental design)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.	Will the study involve discussion of, or collection of information on, sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.	Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to human or animal participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7.	Does the study involve invasive or intrusive procedures such as blood taking or muscle biopsy from human or animal participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8.	Is physiological stress, pain, or more than mild discomfort to humans or animals likely to result from the study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9.	Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences in humans (including the researcher) or animals beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10.	Will the study involve <b>interaction</b> with animals? (If you are simply observing them - e.g. in a zoo or in their natural habitat - without having any contact at all, you can answer "No")	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11.	Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12.	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
13.	Is the study a survey that involves University-wide recruitment of students from <b>Canterbury</b> Christ Church University?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14.	Will the study involve recruitment of participants (including staff) through the NHS or the <b>Department of Social Services</b> of a Local Authority (e.g. Kent County Council)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## Section C: How to Proceed

C1. If you have answered ‘**NO**’ to *all* the questions in Section B, you should complete Sections D–F as appropriate and send the completed and signed Checklist to the Research Governance Manager in the Graduate School and Research Office for the record. **That is all you need to do.** You will receive a letter confirming compliance with University Research Governance procedures.

*[Undergraduate and Master’s students should retain copies of the form and letter; the letter should be submitted with their research report or dissertation (bound in at the beginning). Work that is submitted without this document will be returned un-assessed.]*

C2. If you have answered ‘**YES**’ to *any* of the questions in Section B, you will need to describe more fully how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised by your project. This does not mean that you cannot do the study, only that your proposal will need to be approved by a Research Ethics Committee. **Depending upon which questions you answered ‘YES’ to, you should proceed as follows**

(a) If you answered ‘**YES**’ to any of **questions 1 – 12 ONLY** (i.e. not questions 13 or 14), you will have to submit an application to your Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) using your Faculty’s version of the ***Application for Faculty Research Ethics Committee Approval Form***. This should be submitted as directed on the form. The *Application for Faculty Research Ethics Committee Approval Form* can be obtained from the Faculty Research web site, or via the Research Ethics page of StaffNet.

(b) If you answered ‘**YES**’ to **question 13** you have two options:

(i) If you answered ‘**YES**’ to **question 13 ONLY** you must send copies of this checklist to the Student Survey Unit. Subject to their approval you may then proceed as at C1 above.

(ii) If you answered ‘**YES**’ to **question 13 PLUS any other of questions 1 – 12**, you must proceed as at C2(b)(i) above and then submit an application to your Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) as at C2(a).

(c) If you answered ‘**YES**’ to **question 14** you do not need to submit an application to your Faculty Research Ethics Committee. **INSTEAD**, you must submit an application to the appropriate external NHS Research Ethics Committee (REC) or Local Authority REC, *after* your proposal has received a satisfactory Peer Review (see *Research Governance Handbook*). Applications to an NHS REC or a Local Authority REC must be signed by the appropriate Faculty Director of Research or Faculty representative before they are submitted.

## IMPORTANT

Please note that it is your responsibility in the conduct of your study to follow the policies and procedures set out in the University’s Research Governance Handbook, and any relevant academic or professional guidelines. This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data. Any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the study should be notified to the **Faculty and/or other Research Ethics Committee** that received your original proposal. Depending on the nature of the changes, a new application for ethics approval may be required.

## Section D: Project Details

<p>D1. Project title</p> <p>D2. Start date</p> <p>D3. End date</p> <p>D4. Lay summary (max 300 words <i>which <b>must</b> include a brief description of the methodology to be used for gathering your data)</i>)</p>	<p><b>Learning about teachers as ‘teacher-researchers’.</b></p> <p>October 2012</p> <p>October 2016</p> <p>Using mixed methods including self-study and interview I intend to analyse my interaction with teachers and student teachers. I intend to examine the impact on, both, the tutor and student of trying to engage students in research informed practice beyond their research project, for example getting work published within the primary Education mathematics community and continuing to engage in this sort of enquiry based practice. I will be gathering data from the students with whom I work, and past students who opted to engage in continuous academic development. In particular I wish to examine how the values and beliefs that underpin my pedagogy are received/perceived by the student teachers and whether this has an impact on their professional identity as they enter the teaching profession. I will use field notes, including student feedback, aural recordings of the taught sessions as part of the self-study, and interview notes and recording of student and NQT interviews to gather qualitative data. This is broadly speaking an ethnographic case study of my work place so I shall inform the students that I am engaging in self study and invite them to participate within a range of opt-in levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not to engage purposefully in my research but be prepared to publish/share their research findings.</li> <li>• Take an aspect of teaching and learning from one of the taught sessions and investigate this as part of their research and record in a research journal. I will use these journals to look for common or reoccurring themes about how the research has had an impact on their practice and the developing professional identity.</li> <li>• Engage with me at a collaborative level in which we examine how my teaching and learning has an impact on teaching and learning in school.</li> <li>• Work in small groups on a project of collaborative learning</li> </ul> <p>It is hoped that the research will be used to inform and develop practice and pedagogy of teacher educators with the department and beyond.</p>
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## Section E1: For Students Only

E1. Module name and number or course and Department:	Primary Education
E2. Name of Supervisor or module leader	Alison Ekins Viv Griffiths
E3. Email address of Supervisor or Module leader	<a href="mailto:Viv.griffiths@canterbury.ac.uk">Viv.griffiths@canterbury.ac.uk</a> <a href="mailto:Alison.ekins@canterbury.ac.uk">Alison.ekins@canterbury.ac.uk</a>
E4. Contact address:	Canterbury Christ Church university North Holmes Road Canterbury CT1 1QU

## Section E2: For Supervisors

*Please tick the appropriate boxes. The study should not begin until all boxes are ticked:*

The student has read the relevant sections of the University's Research Governance Handbook, available on University Research web pages at: <a href="http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/research/governance/index.asp">http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/research/governance/index.asp</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The topic merits further investigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The student has the skills to carry out the study	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The participant information sheet or leaflet is appropriate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The procedures for recruitment and obtaining informed consent are appropriate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If a CRB/VBS check is required, this has been carried out	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments from supervisor:	

## Section F: Signatures

- I certify that the information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I certify that a risk assessment for this study has been carried out in compliance with the University's Health and Safety policy.
- I certify that any required CRB/VBS check has been carried out.
- I undertake to carry out this project under the terms specified in the [REDACTED] Research Governance Handbook.
- I undertake to inform the relevant Faculty Research Ethics Committee of any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over the course of the study. I understand that such changes may require a new application for ethics approval.
- I undertake to inform the Research Governance Manager in the Graduate School and Research Office when the proposed study has been completed.
- I am aware of my responsibility to comply with the requirements of the law and appropriate University guidelines relating to the security and confidentiality of participant or other personal data.
- I understand that project records/data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future and that project records should be kept securely for five years or other specified period.
- I understand that the personal data about me contained in this application will be held by the Research Office and that this will be managed according to the principles established in the Data Protection Act.

Principal Investigator	Supervisor or module leader (as appropriate)
Name: Paula Stone	Name: Alison Ekins
Signed:	Signed
Date: 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2012	Date:

## Section G: Submission

This form should be returned, as an attachment to a covering email, to the Research Governance Manager at [roger.bone@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:roger.bone@canterbury.ac.uk)

**N.B. YOU MUST include copies of the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form that you will be using in your study (Model versions on which to base these are appended to this checklist for your convenience). Also copies of any data gathering tools such as questionnaires.**

Providing the covering email is from a verifiable address, there is no longer a need to submit a signed hard copy version.

## CONSENT FORM

### Learning about developing student teachers as 'teacher-researchers'.

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anonymity of the  
institution

**Name of Researcher:** Paula Stone

**Contact details:**

Address:

Senior Lecturer Primary Education

Tel:

Email:

Paula.stone@

**Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential
4. I agree to take part in the above study.


\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

(if different from researcher)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Copies: 1 for participant  
1 for researcher

## **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

### **Learning about developing student teachers as ‘teacher-researchers’.**

A research study is being conducted at [REDACTED] by Paula Stone

### **Background**

In the past three decades there has been a body of research that examines the lives and careers of teachers; Ball and Goodson (1985); Day, Calderhead and Denicolo (1993); Goodson and Hargreaves (1996); and (Day et al. 2000) and more recently a growing body of research that argues that the most effective means of teaching in Higher education is through ‘research-based’ teaching (Healey, 2005). This method of pedagogy underpins my pedagogy and I want to examine how encouraging teachers to engage in research-engaged teaching is received or perceived by the student teachers and whether this has an impact on their professional identity as they embark on their teaching career.

This research project will present a professional reflection and a personal perspective of one teacher educator’s engagement with her group of student teachers as she tries to engage them in research-based practice. This study will be distinctive, as it will examine the impact of the values that the teacher educator holds on the student teachers with whom she works. It is intended that this research project will offer a counter-perspective to the ‘teaching as a craft’ model for teachers (Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, 2010) that is forming the dominant discourse of teacher education at the present time.

### **What will you be required to do?**

Participants in this study will be required to:

- Engage in normal teaching and learning activity
- Be willing to provide feedback to the tutor at the end of each session
- Be willing to be interviewed (optional)
- Be prepared to audio recorded (optional)
- Be prepared to keep a reflective journal (optional)

### **To participate in this research, you must:**

- Be a student of ITE at [REDACTED]
- Be a graduate teacher of [REDACTED]

### **Procedures**



- Taught sessions and tutorials will be recorded either whole or in part;
- Student teachers will write their perceptions of three key teaching points of the session (on Post-it notes);
- ITE tutor will examine these Post-its to determine how student teachers are receiving/perceiving the pedagogy;
- Student teachers who have opted to share their reflective journal will be asked to do so
- ITE tutor will examine these journals to determine how student teachers are receiving/perceiving the pedagogy;
- Student teachers will be interviewed (face to face) and audio recorded and transcribed;
- Transcripts of interviews and field notes will be available for the student teachers to review;
- ITE tutor will examine the transcripts to determine how student teachers are developing their sense of professional identity;
- In phase two I will interview (telephone or face to face) a group of student teachers who have qualified and who have given me permission to see if my pedagogy has had a long term impact on their professional identity and practice.

### **Feedback**

- Student teachers will be invited to read sections of the researcher's field notes to make sure she presented a fair representation of her fieldwork.
- Student teachers will be invited to read and edit, if necessary, transcripts of interviews and tutorials
- The dissertation will be published and a copy placed in the library of CCCU

### **Confidentiality**

All data and personal information will be stored securely within [REDACTED] premises in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's own data protection requirements. Data can only be accessed by Paula Stone. After completion of the study,

all data will be made anonymous (i.e. all personal information associated with the data will be removed).

### **Dissemination of results**

A copy of the PhD will be available to all students and staff in [REDACTED] library

It is intended to disseminate the research as it progresses at research conferences and conference papers

### **Deciding whether to participate**

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

### **Any questions?**

Please contact Paula Stone by phone: [REDACTED] or E-Mail paula.stone@[REDACTED]

## Appendix 2

### Revised Ethics Review Checklist form (May 2015)

Logo deleted to protect  
anonymity of the  
institution

For Research Office Use
Checklist No:
Date
Received by:

#### ETHICS REVIEW CHECKLIST

Sections A and B of this checklist must be completed for every research or knowledge transfer project that involves human or animal<sup>1</sup> participants. These sections serve as a toolkit that will identify whether a full application for ethics approval needs to be submitted.

If the toolkit shows that there is **no need for a full ethical review**, Sections D, E and F should be completed and the checklist forwarded to the Research Governance Manager as described in Section C.

If the toolkit shows that **a full application is required**, this checklist should be set aside and an *Application for Faculty Research Ethics Committee Approval Form* - or an appropriate external application form - should be completed and submitted. **There is no need to complete both documents.**

**Before completing this checklist, please refer to Ethics Policy for Research Involving Human Participants in the University Research Governance Handbook.**

The principal researcher/project leader (or, where the principal researcher/project leader is a student, their supervisor) is responsible for exercising appropriate professional judgement in this review.

**N.B. This checklist must be completed – and any resulting follow-up action taken - before potential participants are approached to take part in any study.**

Type of Project - please mark (x) as appropriate	
Research	Knowledge Exchange
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### Section A: Applicant Details

A1. Name of applicant:	Paula Stone
A2. Status (please underline):	Postgraduate Student / Staff Member
A3. Email address:	Paula .stone@canterbury.ac.uk

A4. Contact address:	<div></div> <div>North Holmes Road</div> <div>CT1 1QW</div>
A5. Telephone number	01227 767700 x3840

## Section B: Ethics Checklist

Please answer each question by marking (X) in the appropriate box:

		Yes	No
1.	Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children, people with learning disabilities), or in unequal relationships (e.g. people in prison, your own staff or students)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2.	Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the vulnerable groups or individuals to be recruited (e.g. students at school, members of self-help groups, residents of nursing home)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3.	Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without usual informed consent procedures having been implemented in advance (e.g. covert observation, certain ethnographic studies)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4.	Will the study use deliberate deception (this does <b>not</b> include randomly assigning participants to groups in an experimental design)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5.	Will the study involve discussion of, or collection of information on, sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6.	Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to human or animal participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7.	Does the study involve invasive or intrusive procedures such as blood taking or muscle biopsy from human or animal participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8.	Is physiological stress, pain, or more than mild discomfort to humans or animals likely to result from the study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9.	Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences in humans (including the researcher) or animals beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10.	Will the study involve <b>interaction</b> with animals? (If you are simply observing them - e.g. in a zoo or in their natural habitat - without having any contact at all, you can answer "No")	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11.	Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12.	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
13.	Is the study a survey that involves University-wide recruitment of students from <b>Canterbury Christ Church University</b> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14.	Will the study involve recruitment of participants (including staff) through the NHS or the <b>Department of Social Services</b> of a Local Authority (e.g. Kent County Council)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## Section C: How to Proceed

C1. If you have answered ‘**NO**’ to ***all*** the questions in Section B, you should complete Sections D–F as appropriate and send the completed and signed Checklist to the Research Governance Manager in the Graduate School and Research Office for the record. **That is all you need to do.** You will receive a letter confirming compliance with University Research Governance procedures.

*[Undergraduate and Master’s students should retain copies of the form and letter; the letter should be submitted with their research report or dissertation (bound in at the beginning). Work that is submitted without this document will be returned un-assessed.]*

C2. If you have answered ‘**YES**’ to ***any*** of the questions in Section B, you will need to describe more fully how you plan to deal with the ethical issues raised by your project. This does not mean that you cannot do the study, only that your proposal will need to be approved by a Research Ethics Committee. **Depending upon which questions you answered ‘YES’ to, you should proceed as follows**

(a) If you answered ‘**YES**’ to any of ***questions 1 – 12 ONLY*** (i.e. not questions 13 or 14), you will have to submit an application to your Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) using your Faculty’s version of the ***Application for Faculty Research Ethics Committee Approval Form***. This should be submitted as directed on the form. The *Application for Faculty Research Ethics Committee Approval Form* can be obtained from the Faculty Research web site, or via the Research Ethics page of StaffNet.

(b) If you answered ‘**YES**’ to ***question 13*** you have two options:

(i) If you answered ‘**YES**’ to ***question 13 ONLY*** you must send copies of this checklist to the Student Survey Unit. Subject to their approval you may then proceed as at C1 above.

(ii) If you answered ‘**YES**’ to ***question 13 PLUS any other of questions 1 – 12***, you must proceed as at C2(b)(i) above and then submit an application to your Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) as at C2(a).

(c) If you answered ‘**YES**’ to ***question 14*** you do not need to submit an application to your Faculty Research Ethics Committee. ***INSTEAD***, you must submit an application to the appropriate external NHS Research Ethics Committee (REC) or Local Authority REC, *after* your proposal has received a satisfactory Peer Review (see *Research Governance Handbook*). Applications to an NHS REC or a Local Authority REC must be signed by the appropriate Faculty Director of Research or Faculty representative before they are submitted.

### **IMPORTANT**

Please note that it is your responsibility in the conduct of your study to follow the policies and procedures set out in the University’s Research Governance Handbook, and any relevant academic or professional guidelines. This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data. Any significant change in the question, design or conduct over the course of the study should be notified to the **Faculty and/or other Research Ethics Committee** that received your original proposal. Depending on the nature of the changes, a new application for ethics approval may be required.

## Section D: Project Details

D1. Project title	<b>Sustaining the academic in Initial Teacher Education</b>
D2. Start date	(To later become: Confronting myself: An autobiographical exploration of the impact of class and education on the formation of self and identity) New title added April 2018 for final submission.
D3. End date	
D4. Lay summary (max 300 words <i>which <b>must</b> include a brief description of the methodology to be used for gathering your data</i> )	<p>Revision to Ethical Review Checklist submitted October 2012 to acknowledge the change in direction of my research.</p> <p>October 2012</p> <p>October 2016</p> <p>Using an auto/biographical approach including my autobiography and my diary and field notes I intend to examine the impact class and education on my class position within the academy</p> <p>The autobiographical nature of my study means that there are other participants in my research who are part of the context but are not the subject of my research ie they are there by implication; this is permissible in accordance with BERA's (2011) guidelines. AS BERA suggest I will need to particularly vigilant about recognising the rights of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of the actors in my research data. I will constantly review this in a reflexive way in discussion with my research supervisors. Protection of the institution and the other actors in the research must take precedence over the presentation of data, whilst remaining true to the data. This means that some data will need to be anonymised by obscuring the date of the diary entry or in the rarest cases the gender of the actor. I will endeavour to write sensitively about the institution and the actors within and treat these with respect.</p> <p>I reserve the right to present a partial story to avoid harm/embarrassment to the significant others in my story; including myself.</p>

### Section E1: For Students Only

E1. Module name and number or course and Department:	Primary Education
E2. Name of Supervisor or module leader	Alison Ekins Linden West
E3. Email address of Supervisor or Module leader	<a href="mailto:Alison.ekins@canterbury.ac.uk">Alison.ekins@canterbury.ac.uk</a> <a href="mailto:Linden.west@canterbury.ac.uk">Linden.west@canterbury.ac.uk</a>
E4. Contact address:	Canterbury Christ Church university North Holmes Road Canterbury CT1 1QU

### Section E2: For Supervisors

*Please tick the appropriate boxes. The study should not begin until all boxes are ticked:*

The student has read the relevant sections of the University's Research Governance Handbook, available on University Research web pages at: <a href="http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/research/governance/index.asp">http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/research/governance/index.asp</a>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The topic merits further investigation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The student has the skills to carry out the study	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The participant information sheet or leaflet is appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
The procedures for recruitment and obtaining informed consent are appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
If a CRB/VBS check is required, this has been carried out	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Comments from supervisor:	



## Section F: Signatures

- I certify that the information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I certify that a risk assessment for this study has been carried out in compliance with the University's Health and Safety policy.
- I certify that any required CRB/VBS check has been carried out.
- I undertake to carry out this project under the terms specified in the [REDACTED] Research Governance Handbook.
- I undertake to inform the relevant Faculty Research Ethics Committee of any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over the course of the study. I understand that such changes may require a new application for ethics approval.
- I undertake to inform the Research Governance Manager in the Graduate School and Research Office when the proposed study has been completed.
- I am aware of my responsibility to comply with the requirements of the law and appropriate University guidelines relating to the security and confidentiality of participant or other personal data.
- I understand that project records/data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future and that project records should be kept securely for five years or other specified period.
- I understand that the personal data about me contained in this application will be held by the Research Office and that this will be managed according to the principles established in the Data Protection Act.

Principal Investigator	Supervisor or module leader (as appropriate)
Name: Paula Stone Signed: Date: 10/5/2015 Revision made	Name: Alison Ekins Signed Date: 14/5/2015

## Section G: Submission

This form should be returned, as an attachment to a covering email, to the Research Governance Manager at [roger.bone@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:roger.bone@canterbury.ac.uk)

**N.B. YOU MUST include copies of the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form that you will be using in your study (Model versions on which to base these are appended to this checklist for your convenience). Also copies of any data gathering tools such as questionnaires.**

Providing the covering email is from a verifiable address, there is no longer a need to submit a signed hard copy version.